

Walgreens to hike minimum age for store tobacco sales

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In this June 25, 2018, file photo shows a Walgreens store in Peoria, Ariz. Walgreens said Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2019, that it has decided to raise its minimum age for tobacco sales several weeks after a top federal official chastised the drugstore chain for violating laws restricting access to cigarettes and other products. (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin, File)

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Deerfield, Illinois-based Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc. said Tuesday that it will require customers to be at least 21 years old to purchase tobacco in any of its more than 9,500 stores nationwide. The policy starts Sept. 1.

Former Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb said in March that Walgreens was a top violator of tobacco sales laws among pharmacies that sell those products. Rival CVS Health Corp. stopped several years ago.

Laws restricting tobacco sales vary nationally.

Most states have set a minimum age of 18, while a dozen have raised that to 21, according to the American Lung Association. Alaska and Alabama set their minimum ages at 19. Many cities and counties also have passed local laws establishing the minimum at 21.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said last week that he plans to introduce legislation to raise the minimum age to 21 nationally. The Kentucky Republican called the legislation a top priority.

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