

Buying smokes? Everyone under 30 now must show ID

August 30 2024, by Robin Foster



A new, tougher rule on the sale of tobacco products will require retailers to check the IDs of any buyers under the age of 30, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced Thursday.

The [final rule](#), which will go into effect Sept. 30, also restricts tobacco vending machine sales to spaces that are limited to people aged 21 and older.

"Today's rule is another key step towards protecting our nation's youth from the health risks of [tobacco products](#)," Dr. Brian King, head of the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products, said in an agency [news release](#) on the rule. "Decades of science has shown that keeping tobacco products away from youth is critical to reducing the number of people who ultimately become addicted to these products and suffer from tobacco-related disease and death."

Importantly, the new restrictions also apply to e-cigarettes, which are popular among young smokers. Although the number of children using e-cigarettes has started to decline over the past five years, 1 out of 10 [high schoolers](#) still say they vaped in the previous 30 days. For middle schoolers, that number was 1 in 22, according to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Studies also show that 9 out of 10 adults who smoke daily reported having their first cigarette by age 18, CNN reported. The federal age limit for tobacco purchases was 18 until [2019](#), when it was raised to 21. Prior to the new rule, tobacco retailers were required to ask all buyers under the age of 27 for ID.

One step to curbing [tobacco use](#) among the young that the FDA has not taken is a ban on [menthol](#) and flavored tobacco products. Flavors, including menthol, are considered a real draw for kids and teens.

The FDA has been looking into menthol and flavored restrictions for more than a decade, but those restrictions have been [waiting for a sign-off](#) from the Biden administration for months.

In the meantime, the FDA noted that it will continue to check that retailers aren't selling tobacco products to underage users. So far, the agency has performed 1.5 million checks, and these have prompted 130,000 warning letters, at least 33,000 financial penalties and more than 200 "no tobacco sale" orders for stores that have violated age restrictions.

More information: The American Lung Association has more on the [dangers of tobacco for youth](#).

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