

# NYC plans to raise legal age for tobacco to 21

*By ACSH Staff — April 23, 2013*

New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn announced yesterday that the City plans to raise the legal age for tobacco product purchases to 21 from 18. Given the stated support for this proposal by both a majority of the Council, as well as Mayor Bloomberg, the likelihood is close to 100 percent that this will be enacted and go into effect, probably this year.

There are of course arguments to be made for and against this change, both theoretical and logistical. Some will argue that if a young person age 18 to 21 can be deemed an adult for legal purposes, can serve (and die) for his her country in the armed forces, and can vote to choose our leaders, on what grounds can they be proscribed from buying cigarettes if they so choose?

Others point out that they will find a way to buy the now-illicit smokes wherever they can, most likely from a smuggler or a guy on the street selling undocumented "loosies," or get them from friends and relatives. And those sources will not be checking IDs nor remitting taxes to the government, that's for certain. This has proven to be true when dealing with the extraordinarily high tax rates on smokes in NYC we proudly proclaim the highest taxes (and therefore the highest prices) for a pack of cigarettes in the nation. And NYC has the lowest adult smoking rate as well, although the teen rate is not that much lower than other areas.

Those in favor and skipping the suspense, that includes me note that addicted adult smokers began smoking in their teens about 80 percent of the time, and before age 21 closer to 90 percent. Once begun, smoking is frightfully addictive. Among the 45 million or so American smokers, well over 400,000 die each year from the consequences of smoking, and while about 3/4 say they want to quit, only one in ten (or fewer) succeed each year. Moreover, it is indisputable that young people under age 21 have not formed the depth of mature judgment ability to perceive the long-range risks of taking up smoking, and thus prove ripe material for tobacco product come-ons, although purchasing cigarettes is illegal under age 18 by Federal law.

[WomanSmoking](#)  
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