



Nicotine-Free Generation Policy

A plain-language guide for Easthampton residents

1 WHAT IS THIS POLICY?

Nicotine-Free Generation (NFG) uses a birthdate cutoff. Anyone born on or after that date can never legally be sold tobacco or nicotine products in Easthampton.

Unlike *Tobacco 21* — which delays access until an age everyone eventually reaches — NFG permanently retires these products for newer cohorts.

Key point: This restricts retailers only. It is **not** a criminal ban on personal possession or use.

2 WHY THIS APPROACH?

Traditional age laws can unintentionally signal that tobacco use is an adult milestone to look forward to. **NFG eliminates that framing entirely.**

The goal: prevent nicotine addiction in future generations and shift social norms so it is no longer seen as a normal adult behavior.

At least **21 Massachusetts communities** have adopted similar policies by late 2025 — the most of any state in the country.

3 IS IT LEGAL HERE?

Yes. In March 2024, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court upheld Brookline's policy in *Six Brothers, Inc. v. Town of Brookline*, confirming that cities and towns may adopt public health rules stricter than state law.

4 DECISIONS THE BOARD IS WEIGHING

- **Scope:** tobacco only, or also vapes and nicotine pouches?
- **Cutoff date:** anyone already eligible to buy today stays eligible.
- **Enforcement:** civil fines through existing retail licensing — no new criminal penalties.

5 WHAT TO EXPECT OVER TIME

SHORT-TERM · 0–2 YRS

Improved retailer ID verification, staff training, and early normative shifts. Some cross-border purchasing possible if neighboring towns haven't adopted similar rules.

MEDIUM-TERM · 2–5 YRS

Cohort effects become visible. Fewer social signals that nicotine becomes acceptable at a future birthday. Regional adoption strengthens impact.

LONG-TERM · 5–20+ YRS

Modeling studies project meaningful reductions in smoking rates and tobacco-related illness as the never-eligible population grows into adulthood.

6 EQUITY & FAIRNESS COMMITMENTS

- **Uniform enforcement:** compliance checks will not target specific neighborhoods or retailer types.
- **Language access:** translated guidance and support for small business retailers.
- **Cessation support:** investment in services for current users — NFG focuses on future cohorts, not current ones.
- **Annual review:** product definitions updated as the nicotine market changes.

7 COMMON QUESTIONS

Isn't this unfair to younger adults?

No one who can legally buy today loses that right. The policy applies only to future cohorts. Ethics scholars who have examined NFG note that preventing addiction justifies treating birth cohorts differently.

Won't people just buy elsewhere?

Some cross-border purchasing is expected at first — which is why regional coordination matters. As neighboring communities and the state adopt similar rules, that gap closes.

Is this prohibition?

No. Prohibition bans a product entirely. NFG is a grandfathered phaseout — current eligible buyers keep their access. Only future cohorts who have not yet developed a dependence are affected.

Questions or comments? Board of Health, City Hall · 50 Payson Ave, Easthampton, MA 01027 · *Full policy memo and source citations available from the Department of Health.*