

# **Tobacco, Vaping, and Other Nicotine Products**

## **Tobacco and Nicotine as A public Health issue**

In the United States, more than 16 million people live with a disease caused by smoking. It is the leading cause of preventable disease, death, and disability across the country. Secondhand smoke exposure contributes to over 40,000 deaths among nonsmoking adults and 400 infant deaths each year. Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at increased risk for respiratory and ear infections, asthma attacks, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

New nicotine products are flooding the shelves including e-cigarettes and vapes, nicotine pouches, nicotine candies, lip balms, and mints. Many of these products are targeted at youth and can cause long term damage. Nicotine is very addictive and can impair brain development in youth, damage blood vessels, harm fertility and increase risks during pregnancy.

## **Tobacco and Vaping Laws in Massachusetts**

### **Flavored Tobacco Ban**

As of December 11, 2019, Massachusetts law prohibits the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol, in non-age-restricted retail stores like corner stores, grocery stores, and gas stations. Beginning June 1, 2020, flavored cigarettes, cigars and other tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes and flavored chewing tobacco, are restricted to licensed smoking bars, of which there are none in Amherst.

[Learn more about the menthol ban in Massachusetts.](#)

### **Types of Retail Stores Selling Tobacco in Amherst**

There are two types of stores where tobacco products can be purchased:

## 1. **Non-Age-Restricted Stores**

- Examples: convenience stores, gas stations, liquor stores
- Restrictions:
  - **Cannot sell** any flavored e-cigarettes or vaping products.
  - **Cannot sell** e-cigarettes with more than 35mg/ml of nicotine.
  - **Cannot sell** nicotine pouches with a nicotine content greater than 6 mg per individual pouch.
  - **Can sell** non-flavored e-cigarettes with 35mg/ml or less nicotine content.
  - **Can sell** nicotine pouches with a nicotine content of 6 mg or less per individual pouch.

## 2. **Adult-Only Retail Tobacco Stores**

- Access is restricted to people over 21 years old.
- Restrictions:
  - **Cannot sell** any flavored e-cigarettes or vaping products.
  - **Cannot sell** nicotine pouches with a nicotine content greater than 6 mg per individual pouch.
  - **Can sell** non-flavored e-cigarettes with 35mg/ml or less nicotine content.
  - **Can sell** nicotine pouches with a nicotine content of 6 mg or less per individual pouch.

For the complete law, visit [2019 Tobacco Control Law](#).

# Nicotine-Free Generation (NFG)

The Amherst Board of Health has adopted the addition of a Nicotine-Free Generation provision in its tobacco regulations. NFG is an evidence-based public health policy focused on reducing the use of nicotine products among our youth. This plan aims to curtail the sale of nicotine products to individuals born on or after January 1, 2005. By implementing this policy, Amherst joins a growing number of communities in Massachusetts in addressing nicotine addiction at its source—youth initiation. Currently the policy has been adopted by 17 cities and towns across the state.

The [Nicotine-Free Generation](#) prohibits the sale of nicotine products, including cigarettes, vapes, smokeless tobacco, and nicotine pouches, to anyone born after January 1, 2005. Unlike traditional tobacco control measures that focus on specific age groups, NFG phases out nicotine sales over generations, effectively cutting off the pipeline of future smokers.

## **The rationale behind a nicotine-free generation**

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, responsible for 480,000 deaths annually with 41,000 deaths resulting from secondhand smoke exposure. Over 9,000 of these deaths occur in Massachusetts alone. Despite significant declines in smoking rates over the decades—from 42% in 1964 to less than 12% in 2022—the tobacco industry continues to innovate, targeting youth with flavored products and appealing marketing. Data from the Massachusetts Youth Health Survey 2023 shows that while only 3.2% of high school students report smoking cigarettes, 16% of high school students report the use of electronic nicotine delivery products (e-cigarettes, vapes, etc.).

Evidence suggests that restricting access to tobacco products works. In one Massachusetts town, when the the minimum tobacco purchase age was raised to from 18 to 21 in 2005, youth smoking rates declined by over 50%—a rate nearly three times higher than in neighboring towns. NFG gradually reduces nicotine availability while maintaining access for current users. This approach avoids the creation of black markets and ensures a smooth transition.

# **Support for Quitting Cigarettes or Vaping**

Quitting tobacco or vaping is difficult, but using FDA-approved medications combined with coaching support increases the chances of success. Most people require multiple attempts to quit, so keep trying!

## **Steps to Quit:**

### **1. Pick a quit date**

- Ideally, choose a date 2-4 weeks in advance to prepare, but you can start sooner if necessary.
- Gradually reduce tobacco use before the quit date.
- Identify and plan for triggers (times, places, feelings that make you want to smoke/vape).

### **2. Talk to your doctor**

- Ask about medicines that help with withdrawal symptoms, many of which are available over the counter (e.g., nicotine patch, gum).
- Check with your health plan for coverage of these medications.

### 3. Access free support

- Call the Massachusetts Smokers' Helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit [makesmokinghistory.org](https://makesmokinghistory.org) for free guidance.

### Menthol Incentive Program

Residents of Massachusetts who are trying to quit can earn incentives by participating in the Menthol Incentive Program. Here's how it works:

- **Earn \$10** after completing your first coaching call.
- **Earn \$15** after your second coaching call.
- **Earn \$25** after your third coaching call.
- You can also receive up to **8 weeks of free Nicotine Replacement Therapy** (after a health screening).

To qualify, residents must enroll online and complete coaching calls by phone. Incentives are subject to availability of funds.

For more details or to enroll, visit [makesmokinghistory.org](https://makesmokinghistory.org).

### Additional Resources:

- **Massachusetts Smokers' Helpline:** 1-800-QUIT-NOW
- **Free Nicotine Replacement Therapy:** Available for eligible participants
- **Online support:** Receive up to five coaching calls and unlimited support.

# Nicotine Free Generation (NFG)

## **Proposed Nicotine-Free Generation Regulation Under Review by the Yarmouth Board of Health**

The Yarmouth Board of Health is currently discussing a proposed Nicotine-Free Generation (NFG) regulation and inviting local community members to learn more and share feedback as part of the public review process.

### **What Is a Nicotine-Free Generation Policy?**

A Nicotine-Free Generation policy is a public health strategy designed to gradually phase out the sale of nicotine products to future generations by establishing a birth-year cutoff for legal sales. Under this approach, individuals born after a specified year would not be able to purchase nicotine products within the town, while current adult consumers would not be affected.

For example, if a birth year were set in the regulation, individuals born after that year would never become eligible to purchase nicotine products in the Town of Yarmouth, even after reaching the current legal age of 21. Individuals born before the cutoff would retain their existing legal access.

The goal of this approach is to reduce nicotine addiction over time by preventing initiation among younger generations while avoiding disruption for current adult consumers.

### **Why Public Health Officials Are Considering This Approach**

Public health officials note that nearly all lifelong nicotine addiction begins during adolescence, when the brain is especially vulnerable to nicotine exposure. Preventing initiation among youth is widely considered one of the most effective ways to reduce long-term nicotine

dependence and protect future generations.

Nicotine is a highly addictive substance that can affect brain development in adolescents, impacting attention, learning, mood, and impulse control. Young people who begin using nicotine are also more likely to develop long-term dependence.

### **Negative Health Impacts of Smoking and Nicotine Use**

Smoking and other nicotine products remain one of the leading causes of preventable illness and death. Tobacco use has been linked to numerous serious health conditions, including:

- Cancer: Smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer and is linked to cancers of the throat, mouth, pancreas, bladder, and several other organs.
- Heart disease: Smoking damages blood vessels, increases blood pressure, and significantly raises the risk of heart attack and stroke.
- Respiratory disease: Long-term smoking can lead to chronic lung conditions such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema, collectively known as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.
- Addiction: Nicotine alters brain chemistry and can lead to strong physical and psychological dependence.
- Pregnancy and developmental risks: Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of premature birth, low birth weight, and other complications.

Even non-smokers can be affected through exposure to secondhand smoke, which has been associated with respiratory illnesses, heart disease, and increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome in infants.

## **Local Discussion and Community Input**

The Yarmouth Board of Health has discussed the Nicotine-Free Generation concept over the past several months during regular meetings as part of its ongoing review of emerging public health strategies. During these discussions, the Board has considered background information, experiences from other Massachusetts communities, and possible implementation considerations.

Community members are encouraged to stay informed and participate in the conversation as the Board continues its review.

Public engagement and feedback play an important role in helping local officials consider the potential public health benefits, practical impacts, and community perspectives related to proposed regulations.

**Residents and businesses can review the current Local Tobacco Regulation and learn more about NFG by using the resources below:**

### **The Nicotine-Free Generation Initiative in Belchertown: A Community Effort for Public Health**

The Belchertown Board of Health is proposing an evidence-based public health policy focused on reducing the use of nicotine products among our youth, building towards a healthier generation. This plan aims to curtail the sale of nicotine products to individuals born on or after January 1, 2004. By implementing this policy, Belchertown joins a growing

number of communities in Massachusetts, across the nation, and around the world, in addressing nicotine addiction at its source—youth initiation.

Youth are especially vulnerable to nicotine addiction, with 95% of smokers starting before age 21 and the NFG policy seeks to disrupt this cycle. By preventing young people from even starting to use tobacco, a highly addictive substance, we are working to building a healthier future for our youth and town.

Belchertown's initiative follows the example set by nine other Massachusetts towns, and growing. The policy has also been implemented nationwide in countries such as the United Kingdom.

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court upheld the legality of the NFG policy earlier this year, solidifying its constitutionality and paving the way for broader adoption. Locally, the policy has garnered support from health coalitions, community groups, and youth organizations, including Belchertown's Helping Hands Youth Group.

### **The Rationale Behind a Nicotine-Free Generation**

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, responsible for 480,000 deaths annually with over 9,000 of these deaths occurring in Massachusetts alone. Despite significant declines in smoking rates over the decades—from 42% in 1964 to less than 12% in 2022—the tobacco industry continues to innovate, targeting youth with flavored products and appealing marketing.

### **Understanding the Policy**

The Nicotine-Free Generation concept is simple but powerful. It prohibits the sale of nicotine products, including cigarettes, vapes, and smokeless tobacco, to anyone born after January 1, 2004. Unlike traditional tobacco control measures that focus on specific age groups, NFG phases out nicotine sales over generations, effectively cutting off the pipeline of future smokers.

The policy focuses on regulating sales rather than personal behavior. This isn't about



taking away rights, it is about protecting youth from addiction and its lifelong consequences. Current nicotine users retain their right to purchase these products, ensuring the policy's gradual and manageable implementation.

### **Economic and Social Impacts**

A significant portion of money spent on tobacco products leaves the local economy. For example, if there are about 1,000 smokers in Belchertown spending an average of \$3,650 annually on cigarettes, that totals \$3.6 million per year. Redirecting even a fraction of this spending to local businesses would benefit our local businesses instead of going to Big Tobacco. Approximately 50% of the price of a pack of cigarettes is in the form of taxes, which does not remain in the community or benefit the store owner.

The average smoker consumes about 15 cigarettes per day, spending around \$10 daily or \$3,650 annually on cigarettes. With about 1,000 smokers in Belchertown, this amounts to over \$3.6 million per year.

If 100 young people avoid smoking, they would collectively save \$365,000 annually, which could be spent on positive activities at our local businesses. Educating people about the financial benefits of quitting smoking can help many successfully quit.

The economic impact of NFG to the ten businesses in Belchertown that sell tobacco as only a part of their sales is expected to be minimal, as the gradual decline in tobacco sales allows retailers to adapt their business models. Youth who use nicotine are a small percentage of local store's customers. Furthermore, reducing nicotine addiction could free up millions of dollars currently spent on smoking-related healthcare costs.

### **Addressing Concerns**

Evidence suggests that restricting access to tobacco products works. In one Massachusetts town, when the minimum tobacco purchase age was raised to from 18 to 21 in 2005, youth smoking rates declined by over 50%—a rate nearly three times higher than in neighboring towns.

NFG gradually reduces nicotine availability while maintaining access for current users. This approach avoids the creation of black markets and ensures a smooth transition.

Twice a year, compliance checks are made by the Pioneer Valley Tobacco Control Coalition in the ten stores in Belchertown to ensure that they are not selling cigarettes to anyone under 21. Unfortunately, half of them have failed these compliance checks.

### **Community Engagement and Education**

Public education remains a cornerstone of Belchertown's strategy in addition to this policy. Local organizations such as the Pioneer Valley Tobacco Control Coalition and the Belchertown Overcoming Adversity Together (BOAT) coalition have been instrumental in raising awareness about the dangers of nicotine and the benefits of the NFG policy.

Youth involvement has also been critical. Helping Hands, a Belchertown student-led group, has vocally supported the initiative, highlighting its potential to protect future generations. According to Helping Hands members, many of their peers are already struggling with nicotine addiction, and the policy offers hope for a healthier future for their generation.

### **A Look Ahead**

Belchertown's Board of Health is set to vote on the Nicotine-Free Generation policy on December 11, 2024 at a public hearing where they will take comments from the public. The agenda and link to the online meeting will be posted on the town's website [www.belchertown.org](http://www.belchertown.org) under "Agendas and Minutes". If passed, the policy will go into effect on January 1, 2025, marking a significant milestone in the town's public health journey. The initiative represents not only a commitment to reducing smoking-related diseases but also a vision for a healthier, more resilient community.

This initiative underscores the importance of proactive, evidence-based public health measures that prioritize the well-being of future generations over the profits of the tobacco industry. As the town moves forward, it stands as a testament to what can be achieved

when communities come together to address pressing health challenges.

