

## Raising the age of sale of tobacco

### Information for teenagers

#### What's happening?

From **Monday, October 1st 2007** the law for selling tobacco will change. It will be illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone under the age of 18 (an increase from 16) in England and Wales. It is expected that the change in law will also come into effect in Scotland from the same date.

#### Why is it happening?

Most addicted adult smokers began as teenagers. This change in law is to help prevent children and young people from starting in the first place, therefore avoiding the serious health dangers of smoking.

- Half of all teenagers who are currently smoking will die from diseases caused by tobacco if they continue to smoke. One quarter will die after 70 years of age and one quarter before, with those dying before 70 losing on average 23 years of life.
- The younger a smoker starts, the greater the risk of developing lung cancer, heart disease or disabling respiratory illness.
- Someone who starts smoking at 15 is three times as likely to die from cancer due to smoking than someone who starts in their mid-20s.

#### How will it affect young people?

- From October 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, young people will need to be 18 to buy cigarettes and other tobacco products. Shops will be required by law not to sell to under 18s and risk prosecution and a fine of up to £2,500 if they do so.
- 18 and 19 year olds who want to buy cigarettes are advised to carry an accredited proof of age card or other valid form of ID (passport, photo driving licence) to prove their age.

#### What help is available for those that want to stop smoking?

- For those who want to stop smoking, the NHS offers a range of services that can help them. Would-be-quitters can call the NHS Smoking Helpline on 0800 169 0 169 or visit [www.gosmokefree.co.uk](http://www.gosmokefree.co.uk) to find the option that's right for them.
- Since the start of 2006, nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) has been made available on prescription to 12-18 year olds for the first time. As well as getting an NRT prescription from their GP, teenagers can also get it from their local NHS Stop Smoking Service.

- Many young people are already trying to stop smoking. In the nine months between April and December 2006 11,258 people aged under 18 set a quit date with their local NHS Stop Smoking Service, with 37% successful at four weeks. (*Statistics on NHS Stop Smoking Services in England, April 2006 to December 2006 (Q3 - Quarterly report)*)

### Supporting facts

- Smoking can have a dramatic effect on how young people look. It prematurely ages skin by between 10 and 20 years; gives a sallow, yellow-grey complexion and a gaunt look; causes gum disease and bad breath; stains teeth and fingers; and increases the risk of cellulite. (*CMO 2003 report/ASH*)
- Smoking can also make people less attractive. Over two-thirds of young people say smoking reduces sexual attractiveness; nearly half of men associate smoking with wrinkles, bad skin, and less enjoyable kissing; and nearly half of smokers say they would quit to improve their sex appeal. (*Survey conducted by ICM Research for the NHS Smoking Helpline*)

For more information about the change in the law, call **020 7492 0980**. A dedicated website for young people affected by the change is being launched in mid-August.