

NEWS RELEASE - For immediate release

**Pharmacists for a Smoke-Free Canada endorses  
raising the age for tobacco to 21**

Toronto, ON, April 4<sup>th</sup> 2017

Pharmacists for a Smoke-Free Canada calls on Health Canada to raise the minimum legal age for tobacco to at least 21 years old. Pharmacists have an important role in helping smokers quit using tobacco. However, we recognize that disease prevention is always even better than treatment.

At present 115,000 Canadians, almost all under the age of 21, will start smoking every year. There are 201,000 Canadian youth between the ages of 15 and 19 who currently smoke. About 75,000 of them will die early from tobacco-related diseases.

Most smokers start in high school, where there are students who are old enough to legally buy tobacco and provide it to young teenagers. In the USA raising the minimum legal age for buying tobacco to 21 reduced high school smoking in one town by 47%. This law has now been extended to Hawaii, California and over 200 municipalities in the USA.

The earlier people start to smoke, the more addicted to nicotine they become; the more they smoke later in life, and the harder it is for them to quit. Eighteen or nineteen is too young to be allowed legal access to an addictive and carcinogenic product which can never be used safely. Raising the minimum legal age for access to tobacco is a scientifically-proven, legally and politically feasible, cheap and effective way to deprive the tobacco industry of a new generation of innocent young victims.

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For more information:

A fresh approach to tobacco control: raising the minimum legal age for access  
John Oyston CMAJ 2017 February 27;189:E293-4. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.161489

[www.tobacco21.ca](http://www.tobacco21.ca)

<mailto:info@tobacco21.ca>

Pharmacists for a Smoke-Free Canada (<http://psfcnwork.com/contact-us>) aims to unite pharmacists across Canada to be a strong voice at a public information level which supports the reduction of tobacco-related illness through reduced smoking.