



TOBACCO TAXES

An approach to prevent youth smoking

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ISSUE BRIEF

POLICY PERSPECTIVE

Childhood is a critical time to prevent tobacco use. Tobacco taxes are an effective way to reduce youth smoking because youth are particularly sensitive to rises in the cost of tobacco products.

Tobacco taxes are also the most cost-effective measure to prevent smoking by children since they actually generate public revenue.

In Idaho, we strive to guide our children to make healthy choices so that they can get the best possible start in life. Preventing tobacco use during childhood is particularly critical. Symptoms of nicotine dependence can appear in adolescents within days or weeks of the first cigarette use.¹ Nearly 80% of smokers try their first cigarette before age 18 and nearly 90% do so before age 20.²

Tobacco taxes reduce youth smoking

Tobacco taxes are the most cost-effective measure to reduce smoking among youth since they actually generate revenue. Youth are up to three times more likely than adults to change their smoking habits when the price of cigarettes goes up.³ A 10% increase in the price of cigarettes is associated with a 6-7% decrease in youth smoking.⁴

Health advocates in Idaho are proposing a \$1.25 tax increase per pack of cigarettes. The average cost of cigarettes in Idaho is \$4.79 per pack.⁵ This tax increase would likely raise the price by 26% (historically taxes have resulted in an equivalent or larger increase in the consumer's price for tobacco products⁶). Idaho can expect a 16-18% decrease in youth smoking from a tobacco tax increase of this size.

Many Idaho kids have access to tobacco products

While smoking among Idaho high school students has declined during the past decade, the use of other tobacco products (e.g. chewing tobacco) increased slightly. In 2011, nearly two in five students had tried cigarette smoking and one in five students had used some form of tobacco in the past 30 days.

Tobacco Use Among Idaho High School Students in 2011⁷

Percentage of students who ever tried cigarette smoking, even one or two puffs	39%
Percentage of students who smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days	14%
Percentage of students with any tobacco use (cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip) in the past 30 days	20%
Percentage of students who smoked a whole cigarette for the first time before age 13	9%

The percentage of high school students who smoked on 20 or more of the previous 30 days ('frequent smokers') increased from 4% in 2009 to 6% in 2011. This percentage still represents a decline from 9% in 2001.⁷

If current patterns of smoking persist, an estimated 24,000 Idaho youth will die prematurely of smoking-related causes.⁷

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For more information, please visit www.idahokidscount.org.

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