

9 new AMA policies patients need to know—and why

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You might not know where important public health laws come from, but you know what they are—a minimum age to drink alcohol, restrictions on smoking and purchasing tobacco, and seatbelt safety requirements. You may be surprised to learn that many of today's precautions for public health and safety have their start with physicians at the AMA. Read on to learn which issues physicians want to tackle next.

When the physicians that make up the AMA's House of Delegates come together, they debate and adopt policies to improve the health of the nation. Many of these policies have eventually become law as the AMA has advocated for their enactment. Here are a handful of such policies that no doubt have impacted you:

- The legal drinking age was raised from 18 to 21 in all states by 1988.
- Tobacco companies admitted their products were deadly in 2012.
- Handicap accessibility became a requirement for public spaces in 1990.
- Seatbelts became a requirement for automobiles in 1968.

At the 2015 AMA Annual Meeting this week, physicians approved a variety of public health policies that could influence how patients stay healthy in the years to come. Doctors are seeking these changes:

1. Ensuring energy drinks have child-resistant packaging to prevent hospitalizations and deaths.
2. Requiring written consent from a physician or member of a physician-led care team for youth athletes suspected of having sustained a concussion to be allowed to return to a sport.

3. Securing labels on sunglasses that state the percentage of UVA and UVB radiation protection of the product to ensure consumers are aware of the extent to which their eyes would be protected.
4. Requiring hand-held electronic devices that use headphones and earbuds to include warning labels about the dangers of headphones use in public because they impede hearing.
5. Developing a list of [best practices guiding the development of mobile medical applications](#) to help ensure their efficiency and trustworthiness. The policy follows the release of a report on the subject by the AMA Council on Science and Public Health, adopted at the 2014 AMA Annual Meeting.
6. Setting the minimum age for purchasing electronic cigarettes to 21 and packaging liquid nicotine in child-resistant containers.
7. [Addressing the prescription overdose epidemic.](#)
8. Increasing what patients can contribute to flexible spending accounts by a reasonable amount to help overcome financial barriers to receiving the care they need.
9. Banning the use of artificial trans fat in food.

Learn more about how the AMA is improving the health of the nation.