# Tobacco vendor licensing plugs the loopholes in implementing lifesaving health laws

**# FEATURE** 

A person and person smiling AI-generated content may be in-

Before the intergovernmental global tobacco treaty meet opens next month, experts call for tobacco vendor licensing so that governments can enforce lifesaving tobacco control policies, protect children and youth from misleading tobacco industry tac-tics and lies, and progress to-wards ending tobacco use. "No one must suffer from tobaccorelated diseases or die of them," rightly said Dr Tara Singh Bam, noted global health expert and Asia Pacific Director of Vital Strategies.

"Tobacco vendor licensing reduces tobacco product availability and accessibility, particularly to vulnerable youth. A key tobacco control measure, tobacco vendor licensing can limit tobac-co retailer density around schools, parks, and hospitals; this is critically important be-cause vendor abundance normalises tobacco use, increases exposure to tobacco advertisements, and thwarts quit efforts. Tobacco vendor licensing can also restrict the types of products sold alongside tobacco and ensures inspectors know where products are sold, allowing for more effective enforcement of all point-of-sale tobacco laws," said Dr Tara Singh Bam, who also serves as Board Director of Asia Pacific Cities Alliance for Health and Development (APCAT).
With no licensing for tobacco

retail, tobacco industries get a freewheeling chance to violate

lifesaving health policies – and keep profiteering while tobacco users suffer the assault of deadly tobacco-related diseases and die prematurely.

With strict licensing for tobacco retail, governments get a legal mechanism to enforce tobacco control policies and ensure compliance by retailers to all laws – for example, penalise those retailers who violate sale of tobacco to minor law, or sell illegal tobacco products (such as, e-cigarettes or vapes which are banned in several countries globally) or violate ban on point-of-sale tobacco advertising, promotion and/or sponsorship.

Almost 3 decades of enforc-

ing tobacco retail laws in Singa-

"Singapore had first established its tobacco control law in 1993. Soon after, tobacco retail laws came into force in 1998. Singapore also made laws in 2003 to license importers and wholesalers of tobacco products, and license fees (and annual renewal) is hefty at over US\$ 2000," said Sabita Karapan, Programme Technical Officer (Tobacco Control) for Asia Pacific region at Vital Strategies and long-standing tobacco control and public health advocate. Fines for violation of tobacco control laws in Singapore are heftier.

Apart from domestic laws, Singapore also ratified the legally binding corporate accountability and public health treaty - global tobacco treaty in May 2004. This treaty is formally called as World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control



Conference of the Parties is next month in Geneva.

Because of implementation of science- and evidence-based tobacco control laws in Singapore, deadly tobacco smoking has almost halved over the years (from 13.7% in 2007 to 8.8% in 2023,

Singapore has enforced a whole battery of science – and evidence-based tobacco control laws stringently. For example, there are very widespread smokefree areas, taxes on tobac-co products are high (67.5%), tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship is banned, standardised packaging is en-forced, and nicotine and tobacco industry's so-called 'new' deadly products (such as e-cigarettes, vapes etc) are also banned. According to the WHO there is no

safe level of tobacco use. Tobacco kills, do not be duped.

Singapore has also banned point-of-sale display of tobacco products. Current minimum legal age for smoking has been increased in 2021 to 21 years.

Singapore's Health Sciences Authority enforces the laws regarding licensing of tobacco retailers, importers and whole-

License fee for tobacco retail is Singapore dollars 400 with an annual renewal fees of dollars 300. "Fines are hefty for violating laws, for example, there is a fine of up to Singapore dollar 10,000 for selling tobacco products to those under 21," said Sabita Karapan. Before joining Vital Strategies, she earlier served the International Union Against TB and Lung Disease (The Union)'s

Asia Pacific regional office.

Sabita Karapan said that it is the legal responsibility of tobacco retailer to ensure that all transactions of tobacco products are carried out at the outlet. The license holder is responsible for actions of all employees. Nonemployees are not allowed by law to handle, retail or access tobacco at the outlet.

It is the responsibility of to-bacco retail license holder to verify the age of the buyer. More-over, the license holder must retain all invoices or receipts for each tobacco transaction for a period of 1 year from the date of issue. "They should be able to produce these during inspections by authorities," said Sabita Karapan.

She outlined the importance of tobacco retail licensing by underpinning how it has helped

Singapore to advance tobacco control in the country and save lives. For example, tobacco retail cannot happen at makeshift or temporary stalls, in hospitals, medical clinics, pharmacies, Chinese medical halls, traditional Chinese clinics, gaming arcades or childcare centres or youth centric institutions among other places mentioned in the law.

"Licensing of tobacco importers, wholesalers and retailers in Singapore has helped to ensure that there are no illegal (nicotine or) tobacco products imported into the country," said Sabita. Singapore's Health Sciences Authority decides if any violation of law has taken place, and if so, then violator-licensee can face hefty fines, and/or even suspension or revocation of li-

Health Sciences Authority of Singapore evaluates severity of violation of tobacco control laws explained Sabita Karapan. For example, selling to minor is more severe than forgetting to close the cabinet after selling the product. But fines are quite hefty, and rightly so. More importantly, compliance of these laws is fairly

Sabita and Dr Bam were speaking in an online session hosted by Resource Centre for Tobacco Control at the Department of Community Medicine and School of Public Health of government-run Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) Chandigarh, India, Vital Strategies and The Union.

## Step Goals For Busy Women: Few Week Ladder To 10k Steps

Walking is one of the easiest and most effective ways to stay active and improve both physical and mental well-being. Many of us get stuck in routines that keep us sitting for long hours, making it hard to reach even a modest daily step count. This 10-week step ladder is designed specifically for busy women who want to gradu-ally and realistically reach 10,000 steps per day. Each week, build on the previous one, adding steps in small, manageable ways that will fit naturally into your life.

**Woman Wearing Black Jacket** While Listening to Musi.

Week 1- Here the goal is to reach 3000-3500 steps per day, which might seem small, but it's a foundation for building a lasting habit. Rather than jumping straight into a high target, it's better to begin by adding short walks into your daily routine. Even 5–10 minutes after meals can make a difference. Stroll around your home or office; not only will it add steps but also will help with digestion and clearing your mind and will give you a mini energy boost. Take a short walk in the morning or evening. These small movements add up surprisingly fast and make the goal feel more achievable.

A woman walking down the stairs in a building.

Week 2- Now, your new goal is to gradually increase your activity, which is 4000 steps per day, just a small jump, but one that keeps you moving forward steadily. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Another easy habit is to walk while on calls. Whether it's a quick work discussion or a chat with a friend, pacing back and forth instead of sitting still keeps your body gently active. The key this



what you're already doing so it feels natural rather than forced. Week 2 is about building momentum while keeping it easy and completely manageable. Every step you add now is a step closer to your 10k goal.

Woman in Purple Tank Top and Black Pants While Listening to Music.

Week 3- This week your goal is 5,000 steps per day, a solid halfway point toward your ulti-mate 10k target. Focusing on adding a 15-20 minute walk specifically for yourself can make a huge difference. If finding a full 15–20 minutes at once feels tricky, split it into two 10-minute sessions, maybe a short walk in the morning to kickstart your day and another after lunch or in the evening. Breaking it up makes it manageable, with multiple short walks as opposed to one long one. Every step counts, and every

step builds momentum toward your 10k goal.

Woman in Black Coat Holding

a Cup of Coffee. Week 4- Now, you are halfway to your 10,000-step goal. This week, set your target to 6,000 steps per day and find natural opportunities to move while staying realistic with your busy schedule. Walk during lunch breaks, even for 10-15 minutes, outside to get fresh air. Similarly, a walk after work can help you transition from your busy day to a more relaxed evening while quietly adding steps to your daily total. You can also start experimenting with a pace that's slightly faster than your usual stroll, it will help improve circulation and strengthen vour muscles.

Portrait of Woman in Tank Top in Forest at Sunset.

Week 5- By week 5, your body is getting started to adapt to your daily movement, the goal for the week is 7000 steps per day, a steady climb that will help build on the habits you've been forming over the past month. Integrate it as enjoyable activities, consider a weekend nature walk, take a break from screens, and boost your mood. Week 5 is about making walking a lifestyle choice, not just a goal. Keep focusing on consistency, and celebrate that you're steadily climbing toward your 10k

Woman Walking on Concrete

Week 6- By this time you might have become a bit active and walking as a part of your natural routine. Set your goal to 7,500 per day, and try to stay active throughout the day even with a busy schedule. Instead of sitting at your desk, pace around your space while talking. Short stair workouts or even a few flights of stairs several times a day add extra steps and strengthen your legs. Even pacing while reading or thinking can contribute more than you realize. Your body is learning to stay active naturally, improving your energy and overall well-being.

Faceless person jogging in

empty park. Week 7- Week 7's goal is 8,500 steps per day, bringing you very close to your ultimate 10k target. This week is about blending walking seamlessly into daily tasks so it feels effortless. Track your daily totals, whether with a smartwatch or phone, will help you stay motivated and aware of your progress. At this stage its also about noticing the benefits you've built up so far, increased stamina, and a sense of accomplishment. Week 7 is proof that small, consistent actions add up, and every step you

take now brings you closer to making 10,000 steps a natural

making 10,000 steps a natural part of your day.

Women Walking on the Street.

Week 8- Week 8 is all about pushing yourself a little further, your goal is 9,000 steps per day, and the focus is on adding purature and movement that will make poseful movement that will make you feel fun rather than forced. Consider introducing a brisk 20–30 minute evening walk. This can be a peaceful way to unwind after a busy day, get some fresh air, and clear your mind.

Person in Blue Denim Jeans and White Sneakers Walking on Road.

Week 9- By Week 9, walking will become a habit woven into your daily life. Your new target is 9,500 steps per day, just a short stretch from your ultimate goal. You can use this week to blend social interaction with walking. This will make walking feel enjoyable and sustainable, rather than a task to check off. Week 9 is also about recognizing your progress. You may notice what you've achieved. Every step will brings you closer to the finish line, while reinforcing habits that will last long after you reach 10,000 steps.

Happy woman stretching be-

**fore running in nature.** Week 10- So, now you have finally reached 10,000 steps per day, your commitment, consistency, and small daily actions have paid off. Maintain your habit by mixing brisk walks, active chores, and short walking breaks throughout your day. Continue exploring new walking routes, this is a reminder that the journey is important, each step you take contributes to your health, energy, and well being.

### Dr Vinay Mishra's

years old girl. While my parents allow lots of concessions to my 17 year old brother but they are very strict with me. I feel very frustrated. How can I deal with this situation. MS

Answer- The frustration of facing strictness from parents while seeing leniency given to a younger brother is a common experience rooted in traditional gender roles and parental double standards. Parents often apply different expectations and rules to daughters and sons based on societal norms. safety concerns, or emotional biases. This can feel unfair and emotionally challenging. To deal with this situation effectively:

**Understand the Context** 

Recognize that parental strictness toward daughters versus sons is often influenced by Indian cultural and social norms, not necessarily by personal dislike. Daughters may be given stricter rules due to perceived safety concerns or different expectations of behavior. These double standards can create feelings of frustration, confusion, and unfairness but are common in families

**Strategies to Cope and Communicate** Reflect on your feelings and acknowledge your frustration as valid

Communicate calmly and assertively with your parents about how their different treatment makes you feel, using "I" statements to express your emotions without blaming.

Ask for explanations about the rules and express your desire for more fairness and

Seek support and advice from trusted adults if needed to build strategies for healthy communication and emotional coping. Focus on respecting your parents' perspective while advocating respectfully for your own needs.

These approaches can reduce frustration and help foster better family understanding and support in the long run.

#### Why Women Dealing With High BMI Can Be At A Risk Of Ovarian Cancer

Maintaining a healthy body weight is not superficial, it goes skin deep. It is essential for our overall well-being

The body weight impacts the blood pressure, the hormonal balance, cardiovascular health. But does it have an impact in any other form, especially in

women? Yes, it does. While the relationship between high Body Mass Index (BMI) and certain gynaecological cancers like uterine and breast cancer is well-documented, recent studies indicate that high BMI may also have a weak, yet notable, association with ovarian cancer especially among premenopausal women.

How it is related?

According to Dr. Nidhi Sharma Chauhan, Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at Saifee Hospital, Mumbai,



"Adipose tissue, body fat is an active en- ovarian epithelial cells, which are implidocrine organ. It secretes excess estrogen which the body isn't naturally supposed to

produce in large amounts.' While this estrogen excess is directly linked with endometrial (uterine) cancer, emerging research suggests it may also contribute to borderline ovarian malignancies or early-stage ovarian cancer, particularly in women in their premenopausal phase.

Another mechanism that could tie BMI to ovarian cancer risk is insulin resistance. "Higher BMI is often associated with increased insulin and insulin-like growth factor (IGF-1) levels, along with androgens," explains Dr.

'These hormonal changes have been shown to encourage the proliferation of

cated in a specific type of ovarian cancer." Though this link remains under further study, the metabolic environment created by obesity is increasingly seen as a factor

in tumour growth. How does it impact the body?

A high BMI not only potentially raises the risk of developing ovarian cancer but may also impact the recovery and long-

term survival. Dr. Chauhan adds, "Women with a lower BMI tend to recover better after ovarian

cancer surgery and treatment. Their five-year survival rates are comparatively higher than women with elevated BMI.'

This makes it even more critical for women to prioritise maintaining a healthy weight before and during treatment.