



Folkhälsomyndigheten
PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF SWEDEN

Test purchases of medium-strong beer and tobacco





Can you tell who is 18? It's difficult to tell someone's age just by their appearance, isn't it?

Answer: Top row from left to right: Age 18, 17, 21, 17. Bottom row: Age 17, 18, 15, 18.

Test purchases

- a method to improve the upholding of the age limit

This information is aimed at those who sell or intend to start selling medium-strong beer or tobacco. The information is about the age limit of 18 years for the sale of medium-strong beer and tobacco, and about the municipality's option to conduct test purchases in order to test the procedures for age control at points-of-sale. Test purchases can provide support and help you to improve your procedures for upholding the age limit.

The information has been produced by the Public Health Agency of Sweden, together with representatives from county administrative boards and municipalities. You can find more information about test purchases and regulations regarding the sale of medium-strong beer and tobacco at the Public Health Agency of Sweden web site: www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/tillsyn. Your municipality can also provide you with support and more information.



Age limit and age control

According to the Alcohol Act and the Tobacco Act, medium-strong beer and tobacco may not be sold or provided to a person under 18 years of age. The person providing the product



has to be sure that the customer is old enough. The simplest way to do this is to ask for identification, and this should be done if you are not sure whether the customer is 18 or older. If the customer cannot then provide valid identification, the cash register clerk cannot sell them medium-strong beer or tobacco. The age limit applies to all forms of sales, for example, sales in a store, in a restaurant, and to tobacco sold from a vending machine.

Responsibility for upholding the age limit

As the business operator, i.e., the owner of the business, you are to organise sales in such a way that persons under the age of 18 cannot purchase medium-strong beer or tobacco. Several demands are made of the business operator in

respect of the sale of medium-strong beer and tobacco. This includes providing information about the age limit and giving employees the support and information they require in order for them to be able to comply with the regulations. It is particularly important that young people get this support, since it can be extra difficult for them to withstand pressure from other young people who want to buy medium-strong beer or tobacco. If you, as business operator, do not satisfy the requirements, the supervisory authorities can decide to impose administrative sanctions so that you take the appropriate remedial action. For example, the municipality may prohibit you from selling medium-strong beer or tobacco.

The person who provides the goods for sale, the cash register clerk, for example, is personally responsible for ensuring that no-one under the age of 18 is able to purchase medium-strong beer or tobacco. The person who sells medium-strong beer or tobacco to someone who is too young can therefore be fined or receive a prison sentence of up to six months.

Test purchases

The municipality can conduct test purchases to find out whether a point-of-sale has good procedures concerning age control. This involves a person who looks young testing whether it is possible for them to buy medium-strong beer or tobacco without providing identification.

How do test purchases work?

The municipality hires a person over the age of 18 to conduct a test purchase. For this method to be effective, the purchase is conducted without the store having any prior warning. However, it is vital that everyone who works in a retail outlet knows that the municipality can conduct test purchases, and the reason for this, so you should therefore inform your employees about what a test purchase entails.

Following the test purchase, the person handling the case at the municipality will contact you and inform you of the result. In that way the municipality can also be assured that you and your employees have understood the appropriate rules and the reasons why there is an age limit. The municipality can also inform you about the risks in not asking for identification.

A test purchase may not be used by the municipality as the basis for an administrative sanction. This means that you, the business operator, cannot be given a sales prohibition due to the result of a test purchase. However, test purchases can help you to test and improve your procedures for upholding the age limit. The municipality provides you with support in your work to improve sales procedures.

Remember to inform your employees that you may be visited by someone who will make a test purchase!

Why are test purchases needed?

Most sellers of medium-strong beer and tobacco are good at informing and putting up signs about the age limit of 18 years but the routines for checking age could be better. Test purchases are a good way of checking this and they can help you, the business operator, to improve your procedures and to uphold the age limit.

If you need further advice or guidance, contact your municipality!

More information material and stickers with the age limit for medium-strong beer and tobacco can be found at the Public Health Agency of Sweden web site: www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se.

Test purchases are a method that the municipality can use for testing whether it is possible to purchase medium-strong beer or tobacco without providing identification. Here we have compiled information for those of you who sell medium-strong beer or tobacco to consumers, and the following questions will be answered:

- What is a test purchase?
- How do test purchases work?
- Who is responsible for compliance with the age limit?

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