

Paul Brunetta on KTVU Mornings on 2

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Anchor Frank Mallicoat: The Food and Drug Administration has officially raised the age to buy tobacco products nationwide from 18 up to 21. The change is a part of a \$1.4 trillion-dollar spending bill that President Trump signed last week. It's not yet clear when the change will take effect nationwide, but the tobacco purchasing age is already 21 here in California and in a number of other States. This also comes as the country is dealing with an increase in e-cigarette use and related illnesses. Now is also the time of year when many people start making those New Year's resolutions to try to break the habit of smoking. Joining us now is Dr. Paul Brunetta. He is the co-founder of the Fontana Tobacco Treatment Center at UCSF Medical Center. He's also the co-author of this book, *Learning to Quit: How to Stop Smoking and Live Free from Nicotine Addiction*. Doctor, good to have you with us. We've talked a lot off camera. I have family members, my parents smoked, my brother still does. They had cancer issues, but yet they still smoke. Talk about the addiction of smoking.

Paul Brunetta, MD: Nicotine is intensely addictive. It's one of the most addictive substances known. It's right up there with heroin and cocaine. When people are using nicotine regularly, it actually changes your brain chemistry because nicotine. There are nicotine receptors in the brain, nicotinic acetylcholine receptors, that bind to nicotine and it changes your brain chemistry, and nicotine has a very short half-life, so your brain chemistry is changed as a teenager. When you don't get access to it, you can feel anxious, depressed angry. You know, you could have mood swings.

Frank Mallicoat: Total mood swings.

Paul Brunetta, MD: And then the way to try to relieve that—which is another cigarette. Right? And that happens typically in teenagers when the brain is forming and that can cause lifetime problems, obviously. It's one of the most addictive substances known and the epidemic of e-cigarette use now is just a public health disaster.

Frank Mallicoat: We'll get to that a moment, but I'm curious about your experience cause you started smoking as a young child really and figured it out pretty quickly. How did you do it?

Paul Brunetta, MD: I had my first cigarette at 9 and then in high school I was experimenting and then when I went off to college as a pre-med student who was pretty stressful, so I was using cigarettes to kind of help with studying anxiety. I began to realize that I was addicted, had multiple quit attempts that were very difficult for me, but finally I decided I did not want it to

want to be a smoking doctor. Just didn't seem like the right thing to do. I was able to quit successfully after many, many attempts. And, this book has 25 interviews and one of them is my story, just to help people understand you know what it's like to go through that as a teenager and a young adult.

Frank Mallicoat: And the book, a bit of a journey as well. It took you a decade to write it.

Paul Brunetta, MD: It did. It did. We really crafted it. You know, we have 25 interviews in Part One --different people that were able to quit successfully. So, if you're not motivated enough to join a group or to go in, at least you can kind of follow along different people's stories as they quit successfully using different techniques. Part Two of the book is really the medical information around smoking, heart disease, lung disease, cancer risk. All the background to nicotine addiction and then all the medications that are used to help people quit successfully.

Frank Mallicoat: The reaction so far has been very positive.

Paul Brunetta, MD: It's been positive. It's number one in its category right now, and if you go to www.learningtoquit.com the e-book is free today and tomorrow.

Frank Mallicoat: No excuse. It's free. There you go. Can we talk about this new law that's about to go into effect raising the age of buying tobacco products up to 21 It is already 21 here in California. You think that'll help a little bit, at least for the younger kids?

Paul Brunetta, MD: I think it will help. I really think it will help. I think I wish it had happened 10 years ago, but I think it certainly will help.

Frank Mallicoat: And let's talk about vaping because this is creating all kinds of issues. Yeah. In my generation, I mean, I grew up with parents that smoked. I hate cigarettes. None of my friends smoke, but a new generation is getting hooked on this. And here we go again. Right?

Paul Brunetta, MD: It's really a public health disaster. So, 25% of all high school seniors in the U.S. now report e-cigarette use within the past 30 days. That number has been going up and up and up, and we're not seeing a peak to that yet. Five million young people. Again, nicotine is intensely addictive. Many of them don't know that these e-cigarettes and vaping mods have nicotine. And we also see that some people that are using e-cigarettes transition to regular cigarettes, I would think it'd be a steppingstone to the next, the next step.

Frank Mallicoat: I pulled this out of your book. 100 million people died, of tobacco related illnesses in the 20th century. Yeah, I mean, hello.

Paul Brunetta, MD: That's exactly right. And every year UCSF has something called the Billion Lives Symposium because close to a billion people are anticipated to die this century from tobacco-related diseases. Like we live in a bubble. We're where the, the rate of smoking. Is relatively low. But it is very, very high globally.

Frank Mallicoat: And before we let you go, a lot of folks out there, New Year's resolutions say, I want to quit smoking. I hope my brother does someday. What advice do you have to them besides getting your book? Which would be a helpful tool, but something inside.

Paul Brunetta, MD: I think really just to be kind to yourself. I mean, this is a stressful season and a difficult season to quit. But it is a great time of year to get new resources and to make an attempt for sure. Don't stop trying. There are many things you can learn, and you can be successful.

Frank Mallicoat: Did you say in the book, it's like learning to walk, you're going to fall down a bruise yourself, but keep going...

Paul Brunetta, MD: Same thing with skateboarding, you're going to eat it at some point.

Frank Mallicoat: Or skiing.

Paul Brunetta, MD: Exactly. But you keep, you keep trying and don't stop trying. The most important thing you'll ever do for your health.

Frank Mallicoat: It is a true, how many times did you try to quit?

Paul Brunetta, MD: More than a dozen.

Frank Mallicoat: More than a dozen. All right. Doctor, thank you for coming in.

Paul Brunetta, MD: Thank you so much. Really appreciate it.

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