



People in the Military or Veterans

Why it Matters

- Cigarette smoking prevalence is higher among people currently serving in the U.S. military than among the civilian population. Prevalence is even higher among military personnel who have been deployed.¹
- Tobacco use impairs military readiness by reducing physical fitness, impairing visual acuity, and contributing to hearing loss.
- Tobacco use has a significant financial impact. During 2010, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) spent an estimated \$2.7 billion on smoking-related ambulatory care, prescription drugs, hospitalization, and home health care.²
- The Department of Defense (DOD) spends more than \$1.6 billion per year on tobacco-related medical care.³
- Historically, the tobacco companies have targeted military personnel with discounted and/or free tobacco products and advertising aimed at active personnel.
- In 2018, 60.2% of veterans were classified as ever smokers and 14.6% were current smokers. Slightly over half (53.2%) of current smokers made a recent unsuccessful quit attempt.⁴
- Veterans who are female and are in care at the VA smoke at the rate of 16.2%, as compared to 15.1% in the civilian population.⁵
- Studies have shown that veterans who are female and who quit smoking report significantly fewer depressive symptoms than current smokers.⁶
- Current smokers were more heavily represented by people who are under 65 years of age, who are American Indian/Alaska Native non-Hispanic, and those who earned lower incomes, or were uninsured, unemployed, or reporting fair/poor health. Among military veterans, 29.2% of veterans reported current tobacco product use. Cigarettes were the most commonly used tobacco product among veterans at 21.6%.⁷
- The rate of tobacco use is declining in the military, similar to non-military populations.
- 38% of military personnel who smoke started after enlisting.⁸
- In 2015, nearly 36% of military personnel reported ever having used e-cigarettes and about 11% identified as daily users of e-cigarettes, an eight-fold and three-fold increase since 2011.⁹



What We Know About What Works

- Model efforts on the joint DOD and VA Management of Tobacco Use Working Group that developed the 2004 clinical practice guideline to ensure consistency from active duty personnel to veterans.¹⁰
- Recommendations made by the Institute of Medicine Committee on Smoking Cessation in Military and Veteran Populations:¹¹
 - Prohibit tobacco use anywhere on military installations
 - Stop selling tobacco products in military commissaries – until that is accomplished, sell tobacco products at prices equivalent to civilian prices—requires a policy change to all DOD to do this
 - Support federal policy change to permit VA medical facilities to go entirely smokefree
 - Incorporate evaluation of results into cessation programs (e.g. quit rates) to better learn what approaches are most effective with this population
 - Expand TRICARE coverage to include smokeless and electronic cessation
- For veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) who smoke, an integrated model of smoking cessation with PTSD providers and staff provider consistent care was found to be effective and superior to standard-of-care smoking cessation programs provided separately from PTSD clinics.¹²
- A randomized clinical trial found that proactive tobacco use treatment for veterans (as opposed to reactive in which the tobacco user seeks out cessation support), is an effective way to connect veterans who smoke to evidence-based telephone or in-person smoking cessation services and is effective for increasing long-term population-level cessation rates.¹³

What's Relevant in Pennsylvania

- Pennsylvania's governor signed a law raising the purchase age for tobacco products to 21 on November 27, 2019, effective 7/1/2020. The policy exempts military service members and veterans.¹⁴
- [Adagio Health](#) in Western Pennsylvania provides services targeted to veterans who are female, including wellness and addiction programs.

What Branches of the Military are Doing

Several programs are available to any active duty or retired military

- Operation Live Well military support site for information and resources - <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/health-wellness/healthy-living/healthy-base-initiative/healthy-base-initiative-the-essentials/>
- Active duty or retired service members and their families may receive counseling, medications and other cessation services through TRICARE coverage <https://www.tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/TobaccoCessationServices>
- Defense Department's YouCanQuit2 campaign to help people in the US military quit tobacco. The site includes a live chat where coaches provide personalized online support, resources, tips, and encouragement to those who want to quit tobacco. <https://www.ycq2.org/>

Veteran's Programs

- Veterans who receive care through the VA can call the VA national quitline at 1-855-QUIT-VET (1-855-784-8838).
- Visit the VA's [Tobacco and Health](#) page to find information about quitting tobacco, cessation medications, counseling.
- For texting support and other resources, sign up for SmokeFreeVET or text VET to 47848 for support in English and VETesp for support in Spanish. https://veterans.smokefree.gov/?utm_source=cdc&utm_medium=website&utm_campaign=tips

Each branch of the military also has cessation services or promotes the Department of Defense programs.

- **Airforce:** <https://www.airforcemedicine.af.mil/Resources/Health-Promotion/Tobacco-Free-Living/>
- **Army:** Army Public Health Center for tobacco cessation and vaping resources <https://phc.amedd.army.mil/Pages/default.aspx>
- **Navy:** Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center – No Dips. No Butts. More Glory. <https://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/tobacco-free-living/Pages/tobacco-free-living.aspx>
- **Marine Corps:** Marine Corps Community Services Operation Tobacco-Free Marine <https://usmc-mccs.org/articles/everything-you-need-to-know-about-operation-tobacco-free-marine/>.
- **US Coast Guard:** Promotes the Department of Defense You Can Quit 2 Program <https://www.ycq2.org/> and the American Cancer Society Quit line at 1-800-QUIT NOW.

References and Resources

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 - Women & Smoking Cessation Handbook: A Resource for Providers. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/docs/Smoking-Cessation-for-Women-Handbook-PROVIDERS-Final-2017-508.pdf>
 - American Lung Association: Tobacco Cessation Coverage and TRICARE <https://www.lung.org/getmedia/e40c4756-fab6-4ff2-b225-9d6152c34fd6/tobacco-cessation-and-tricare-1.pdf.pdf>
 - Institute of Medicine Committee on Smoking Cessation in Military and Veteran Populations. Combating Tobacco Use in Military and Veteran Populations. National Academies Press, 2009. ISBN-13:978-0-309-13767-6. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK215333/>
 - Easter Seals and CVS Living Tobacco Free: A Toolkit for Military and Veteran Family Caregivers <https://www.easterseals.com/shared-components/document-library/tobacco-free-toolkit-2.pdf>
 - The Regional Pennsylvania Tobacco-Free Coalitions has a [Veteran's Tobacco-Free Toolkit](#) that can be utilized to find more specific facts on tobacco use in the military and among veterans.
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Tags:

Homeless, Veterans, American Indian/Alaska Native non-Hispanic, Low Income, Mental Illness (PTSD)