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Smoking rates steadily trend down among Veterans receiving VA care

Veterans urged to pursue smoking freedom: ‘Don’t quit trying. Try quitting.’

WASHINGTON — In conjunction with the [Great American Smokeout](#) observed Nov. 18, the Department of Veterans Affairs is encouraging Veterans to talk to their health care providers about smoking cessation programs to help them quit, as cigarette use continues to decline nationwide.

The [2020 Survey of Veteran Enrollees’ Health and Use of Health Care Data Findings Report](#), published in March 2021, found that the rate of Veterans enrolled in VA health care who identified as smokers dropped nearly 20% in 21 years, from 33% in 1999 to 13.3% in 2020.

By comparison, the smoking rate among enrolled Veterans is slightly lower than the rate of smokers in the U.S. general population, which is currently 14.2%.

“Quitting smoking isn’t easy, but don’t quit trying — the [benefits](#) of quitting include reducing stress and cancer risks, lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, and improving one’s overall mental health,” said National Mental Health Director for Tobacco and Health Kim Hamlett-Berry, Ph.D. “While rates of smoking have steadily declined, most people make several attempts to quit. [Research](#) has found that combining treatments, such as counseling and prescription medication, increases Veterans’ chances of stopping smoking for good.”

In addition to VA’s wide range of [tobacco use treatment options](#), VA provides many other services designed to help Veterans stop smoking, like nicotine-replacement products, gum and patches, and supportive resources, such as:

- [Quit VET](#): Veterans can call 1-855-QUIT-VET (1-855-784-8838) to receive tobacco cessation counseling from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., ET Monday through Friday. Counseling is available in English and Spanish.
- [SmokefreeVET](#): For tools and tips to quit smoking, Veterans can sign up for SmokefreeVET by texting VET to 47848. This service is also available in Spanish.

Counseling support and all FDA-approved smoking cessation medications are available for eligible Veterans seeking assistance with quitting smoking.

[Learn more](#) about VA’s tobacco cessation resources.

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