

Office of Health Equity

Veterans Health Administration

Department of Veterans Affairs



TOBACCO USE IN WOMEN VETERANS AND TREATMENT RESOURCES TO PROMOTE EQUITY

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INTRODUCTION

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) serves a Veteran population that is diverse. Equitable access to high-quality care for all Veterans is a major tenet of the VA healthcare mission. The Office of Health Equity (OHE) champions the elimination of health disparities and achieving health equity for all Veterans.

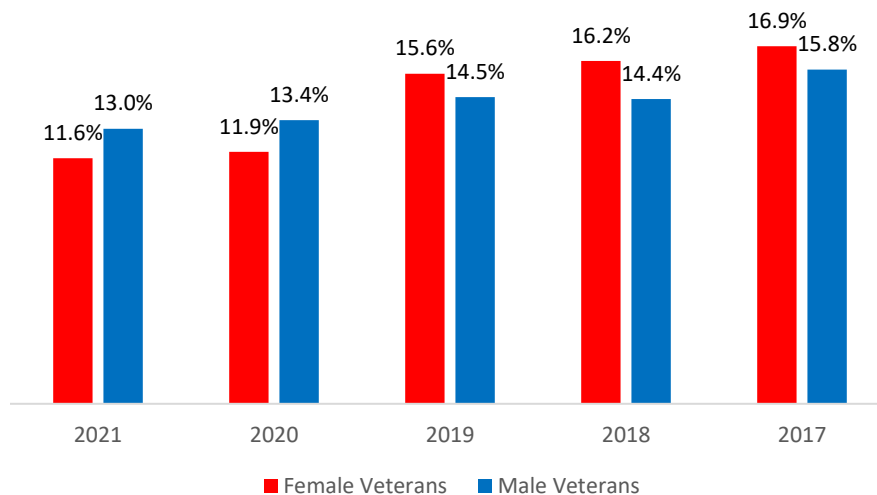
HEALTH DISPARITIES

Smoking is a significant health problem for Veterans and remains an important measure in assessing the health of VA enrollees. Smokers are more likely than nonsmokers to develop heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer. Although most young smokers start smoking prior to age 18, many Veterans began smoking during their military service.

More than 2 million women Veterans live in the United States today and are the fastest growing group in the Veteran population,

making up to 18% of the Veteran population by 2040. According to VA's Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Use of Health Care, 55.5% of Veterans had smoked at some point and 12.9% of VA enrollees were current smokers. While in the past women Veterans smoked at higher rates than male Veterans, beginning in 2020, their smoking rates are now lower than male Veterans.

Smoking Rates in Veterans by Gender Over Time



From VA Survey of Veteran Enrollees' Health and Use of Health Care; Survey reports are available on the VHA's Chief Strategy Office internet website: <http://www.va.gov/HEALTHPOLICYPLANNING/analysis.asp>.



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REDUCING DISPARITIES

Smoking is a preventable cause of most of the leading causes of death. The Office of Health Equity supports efforts across VA working to reduce health disparities by supporting efforts that to ensure Veterans who smoke have the resources they need to quit using tobacco.

Women Veterans who smoke are at a high risk for additional health effects from smoking, such as infertility, osteoporosis, breast cancer, and cervical cancer. If the woman Veteran were to smoke while taking birth control pills, she is at a higher risk of blood clots, stroke, and heart disease.

RESOURCES TO HELP VETERANS QUIT

58.3% of Veterans who currently smoke have attempted to quit in the previous 12 months and 71.4% of all VA enrollees who have ever smoked have quit successfully. VA has resources that are specific to women Veterans to help them successfully stop smoking. These include a [patient workbook](#) and a [provider handbook](#) focused on tobacco use treatment in women. VA also has patient information sheets on gender-specific topics such as “[Urologic Health & Tobacco Use](#),” “[Women’s Health & Tobacco Use](#),” and “[Fertility, Pregnancy, and Tobacco Use](#).”

The Smokefree Women site has a summary of some of the differences in smoking cessation among

women compared to men: [Smokefree Women: How Quitting Can Be Different for Women](#).

Other resources available to Veterans to help them quit smoking include:

- Veterans can receive individual support in stopping tobacco use and counseling in English or in Spanish from VA’s tobacco quitline by calling [1-855-QUIT-VET \(1-855-784-8838\)](tel:1-855-QUIT-VET) Monday through Friday, 9AM – 9PM EST.
- VA’s [SmokefreeVET text message program](#) is available in English and Spanish. Get started by simply texting VETesp to 47848 for Spanish or testing VET to 47848 for English. On-demand support is available by texting keywords STRESS, URGE, or SMOKED to 47848.
- Learn more about how to “Quit for Good with Nicotine Replacement Therapy.” Available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
- Veterans can create their quit plan today on SmokefreeVET. Available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
- Handouts are available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) to help Veterans better understand how other health conditions are affected by tobacco use.

For more information about these resources to help quit tobacco, visit: [Tobacco and Health - Mental Health \(va.gov\)](#)

For more information about the Office of Health Equity visit: <https://www.va.gov/healthequity/>