
How are PTSD and smoking related?

If you are a Veteran living with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and you smoke, you are not alone. Veterans with PTSD are more likely to smoke than Veterans without PTSD.

Many people with PTSD report that they smoke to manage their mood and to deal with stress and anxiety. As a Veteran, your stress may be related to your experiences during deployment or coping with life after the military. While smoking may feel like it helps you alleviate stress, in the long run it can make your PTSD and stress symptoms worse.

What kinds of problems can occur when I have PTSD and I smoke?

Possible symptoms

- Smoking may make your PTSD symptoms—including feelings of anxiety, re-experiencing, avoidance, and numbing—worse
- Smoking can make it harder to fall asleep and worsen the quality of your sleep
- Smoking can cause problems with specific medications
- Anyone who uses tobacco puts themselves at risk for serious health conditions including cancer, COPD, stroke, and heart disease

How will quitting smoking improve my physical and mental health?

While quitting smoking can be challenging, research has shown that Veterans with PTSD can successfully quit and quitting will not make your PTSD symptoms worse. VA can provide you with support as you go through this process.

When you quit smoking, you:

- May experience less anxiety and relief from some of your PTSD symptoms, especially the longer you've been quit
- Improve your mood and quality of life
- Give medications for depression or anxiety their best chance of working properly for you
- Reduce your risk for many health problems including cancer, COPD, and heart and breathing issues

I want to quit using tobacco — how do I get started?

- Call VA's tobacco quitline at **1-855-QUIT-VET** (1-855-784-8838) Monday–Friday, available in English & Spanish
- Sign up for VA's SmokefreeVET text messaging program—text the word **VET** to **47848** (or **VETesp** to **47848** for Spanish) or visit smokefree.gov/VET
- Talk to your VA primary care provider or psychiatrist about tobacco cessation medications and counseling that can help you quit
- Visit publichealth.va.gov/smoking