

# SCHIZOPHRENIA & TOBACCO USE



## How are smoking and schizophrenia related?

People living with schizophrenia are more likely to smoke than people who don't have this mental health disorder and the same holds true for Veterans—almost half of the Veterans with schizophrenia in VA care smoke cigarettes.

While it is commonly believed that smoking provides relief from symptoms of schizophrenia, any effects smoking may have are limited and short-lived. Any short-term relief felt by smoking is soon replaced by the stress of nicotine withdrawal.

## What kinds of problems can occur if I smoke and have schizophrenia?

- You have a greater chance of being hospitalized, experiencing severe psychiatric symptoms, and needing higher doses of medication
- Your brain may not function as well when it comes to your memory, problem solving, focusing your attention, taking care of yourself, how you relate to others, and how you perform at work
- You may be more likely to think about or attempt suicide
- You are much more likely to die from heart disease or cancer related to tobacco use
- You are likely spending a significant amount of money on cigarettes (1 pack/day x \$6.28=more than \$2,290 a year)

## How will my health improve if I quit smoking?

Quitting smoking will not worsen your symptoms of schizophrenia. When you quit smoking:

- Medications like haloperidol (Haldol®), chlorpromazine (Thorazine®), and thiothixene (Navane®) work better with fewer side effects
- You decrease your chance of having suicidal thoughts or attempting suicide
- You decrease your chance of getting serious medical conditions like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and heart disease, or having a stroke

## 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](https://smokefree.gov/VET)
- Talk to your VA primary care provider or mental health provider about tobacco cessation medications and counseling that can help you quit
- Visit [publichealth.va.gov/smoking](https://publichealth.va.gov/smoking)



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