

DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY & TOBACCO USE



How are depression and anxiety related to smoking?

People living with depression or anxiety are two times more likely to smoke cigarettes than people without these health conditions, and die 25 years earlier than Americans overall.

While it's common to think that smoking relieves stress, that's actually not true. Any short-term relief felt by smoking is soon replaced by the stress of nicotine withdrawal. In fact, it's quitting that lowers your levels of stress and decreases your symptoms of depression.

What kinds of health problems can occur because I smoke and have depression or anxiety?

- Smoking can increase your feelings of stress and anxiety as well as symptoms of depression
- Certain medications used to treat depression and anxiety disorders don't work as well when you smoke
- You may be more likely to think about or attempt suicide
- People with mental health disorders who smoke are more likely to die from cancer, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory illnesses than individuals who smoke and are not living with such a disorder

How will my health improve if I quit smoking?

While quitting smoking can be challenging, research has shown that Veterans with anxiety or depression can successfully quit.

Research has also found that quitting smoking can decrease feelings of depression, anxiety, and stress and improve your mood and quality of life. Quitting will not jeopardize your mental health treatment or increase your chance of having suicidal thoughts or needing psychiatric hospitalization.

The physical benefits of quitting include lowering your risk of getting and dying from conditions like tobacco-related cancer, heart disease, and respiratory disease. If you have depression and use alcohol, you may drink less after you quit.

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 mental health provider about tobacco cessation medications and counseling that can help you quit
- Visit publichealth.va.gov/smoking



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