

# Smoking and the Coronavirus Pandemic

## Health Risks and How to Quit

Stopping smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health. Smoking harms the lungs, heart, and nearly every organ in the body. Smoking may increase your risk for being infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 and increase your chance of experiencing severe illness. What is well-known in any case is the fact that quitting will not only improve your health — your breathing improves within a few days of stopping — it will also save you money.

### MAKE A PLAN TO QUIT

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#### How to start:

- Set a quit date
- Tell your family and friends
- Anticipate and plan for challenges
- Remove cigarettes from your home and car
- Talk to your doctor — ask about medications and counseling supports

### RESOURCES

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#### Veterans have many options to receive tobacco cessation treatment without leaving home:

- Call or send a secure message to your VA health care provider through the [MyHealthVet](#) web portal to find out if they are among the many who offer one-on-one or group sessions by phone or video.
- Talk to your doctor about using the nicotine patch, gum, lozenges, or other medications to help you quit. They can prescribe medication and have it mailed to your home.
- Call [Quit VET \(1-855-QUIT-VET, 1-855-784-8838\)](#) to speak to a tobacco cessation counselor between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday in English or Spanish. Quit VET connects Veterans to a trained counselor who can help develop a quit plan and provide ongoing counseling and support to prevent relapse.
- Sign up for [SmokefreeVET](#) to receive texts with encouragement and support by texting VET to 47848. (For Spanish text VETESP to 47848). The benefits of signing up include regular text messages and tips when you text the keywords URGE, STRESS, or SMOKED.
- Follow the [SmokefreeVET Facebook](#) page for tips and encouragement from other Veterans.
- Find VA resources and more tips for quitting at [mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco](https://mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco) and [veterans.smokefree.gov](https://veterans.smokefree.gov).
- The [Veterans Health Administration's Stop Smoking YouTube Channel](#) features stories of others who have stopped smoking as well as tips to help you stop using tobacco.

## STAY CONNECTED

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Technology has made it possible for all of us to stay connected. Seek support from your family, friends, mentors, clergy members, and people you know who are having experiences like yours. As a Veteran, your resilience and strength can also assist others during these times.

## KEEP YOUR MENTAL HEALTH APPOINTMENTS

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### Learn ways to connect with VA providers:

- VA offers both [video and phone](#) telemental health options that do not require you to go to your closest facility in-person should you have a medical concern or need to follow specific physical distancing guidelines in your community.
- [Schedule or reschedule your appointment online](#). If you are requesting a new mental health appointment, please call your [local VA](#) and they will work to arrange an appointment for you. If you need same day access for mental health services, call your [local VA](#) to request this and you will be connected to care.

## STAY INFORMED, STAY ENGAGED

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### Stay engaged with VA information as it becomes available so you can continue to maintain your mental health:

- [VA's Novel Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) webpage](#) has the most current information and [VA's Coronavirus FAQs](#) page provides answers to many important questions.
- You can communicate with your care team, track your health information, and access your VA health records from your computer or mobile device with [My HealthVet](#).
- [VA Video Connect](#) provides secure video visits with your VA care team from anywhere.
- [Mental Health Apps for Veterans](#) provide tools to manage feelings of stress and anxiety and also remain in contact with VA care providers.
- [Healthy Sleep](#) at My HealthVet provides guidance on getting the right amount of daily sleep.
- [VA's Mental Health Coronavirus Page](#) has information on maintaining your mental health and well-being during the COVID-19 outbreak.

