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New Program to Help Troops Quit Tobacco PROVIDES FREE MEDICATION AND COACHING

A new program offering free medication and coaching to all Wisconsin military personnel who want to quit smoking or chewing tobacco was announced today—one day before the Great American Smokeout. The program, Operation Quit Tobacco, provides free nicotine patches or gum to military personnel who call the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW. This program is available to all military personnel—active duty, Wisconsin National Guard members, reservists and all veterans.

"We want to avoid the epidemic of lung cancer that followed the heavy tobacco use in previous wars. This program provides exactly what our military personnel need to quit," said Dr. Michael Fiore, director of the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI), sponsor of the program. "The combination of medication and coaching through a quit line has been shown to significantly increase quitting success."

After years of declining numbers, smoking in the military has increased since 2000, standing at 34 percent in 2002, compared with less than 25 percent of the general population. According to a recent study, among Air Force recruits, 43 percent of ex-smokers returned to smoking.

"We are concerned about the long-term effects of tobacco on the veterans community and we want to help them," said John A. Scocos, Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. "For these reasons, we support this program."

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Military personnel who call the Quit Line will receive two-week starter kits of nicotine patches or nicotine gum. The quit kits will contain information on obtaining additional medication through U. S. Veterans Administration (VA) hospitals and clinics and other programs. Callers must use a Wisconsin area code to obtain the free quit kit.

Callers will also receive coaching from the Quit Line, which will help them develop an individualized quit plan. The Quit Line will proactively call at times agreed upon by the caller and the Quit Line coach for help with quitting strategies and use of medication. This approach can quadruple the success of a quit attempt. People making a quit attempt can call the Quit Line at any time for support and tips on overcoming cravings or withdrawal symptoms.

“We are pleased that this program is available for all Wisconsin National Guard and active duty personnel who smoke or chew tobacco. This is a great opportunity for soldiers to receive the help that some may need,” said Col. Shirley Kubiak, the safety and occupational health manager for the Department of Military Affairs.

“VA hospitals and clinics throughout Wisconsin have strong programs to treat tobacco use. Operation Quit Tobacco is a great way to get our veterans started in the right direction,” said Nathan Geraths, Director, Wm. S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital in Madison.

The Quit Line is managed by UW-CTRI, which is nationally recognized for its leadership in reducing the burden of illness and death from tobacco use. Part of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, UW-CTRI research programs strive to improve tobacco dependence treatment and help people quit.

**Wisconsin Tobacco
Quit Line**

1-800-QUIT-NOW

Hours: 7 am to 11 pm
daily

At other times, leave a
message.