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Help On the Way for Veterans Day

AS MORE TROOPS RETURN HOME HOOKED ON NICOTINE – THERE'S HELP

MADISON—As more and more troops are returning from Afghanistan and Iraq hooked on tobacco, the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line today announced a renewal of its successful program to help them quit smoking or chewing.

More than 400 Wisconsin troops and veterans have already enrolled in Operation Quit Tobacco, which last Veterans Day began providing free medication and coaching on how to quit to vets and military personnel who call the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line at **1-800-QUIT-NOW** (784-8669). Operation Quit Tobacco will now continue to be available to all military personnel—including those on active duty as well as Wisconsin National Guard members, reservists and all Wisconsin veterans.

Increased Demand for Help to Quit. Dr. Michael Fiore, director of the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI), said more troops will likely return to the U.S. seeking help with tobacco addiction.

“We know a lot of our troops are smoking in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the United States Surgeon General has determined that nicotine can be as addictive as cocaine or heroine,” Dr. Fiore said. “But research shows 70 percent of all smokers want to quit, and the increase in the cigarette tax will likely increase interest in quitting.”

Operation Quit Tobacco

1-800-QUIT-NOW

Hours:
7 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily

At other times,
leave a message.

(MORE)

A Familiar Trend. Between the two Iraq wars, the military smoking rate increased from 29 percent in 1998 to 34 percent by 2002, according to a report in the *American Journal of Public Health*. More than 30 percent of military smokers said they began smoking after entering the military. History shows that's bad news for the health of veterans and their families. For example, smoking among servicemen addicted during World War II led to a nine-fold increase in lung cancer deaths by 1980.

Stressed Out. There's evidence that smoking doesn't just kill veterans, it is also associated with doubling the risk of experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, according to the journal *Archives of General Psychiatry*. But quitting can help—some mental-health professionals report that psychiatric symptoms typically improve after people quit smoking.

What They'll Get. Military personnel who call the Quit Line receive free, personalized, in-depth coaching on how to quit, plus a two-week starter kit of nicotine patches or nicotine gum. The quit kits contain information on how to obtain additional medication through U.S. Veterans Administration hospitals, clinics and other military programs. Callers must use a Wisconsin area code to obtain a free quit kit. Quit Line coaches follow up via phone at times agreed upon by the participant; they offer quit strategies, including setting a quit date and working through cravings. This approach can quadruple the success of a quit attempt.

"Our troops have done so much for us," Fiore said. "This is a small way to give back to them."

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The Quit Line and Operation Quit Tobacco are 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. All Wisconsin residents can call the Quit Line for free, confidential, non-judgmental assistance with quitting smoking or chewing.