



## News Release

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Contact: Moira Harrington, 608-265-4447  
[mh1@ctri.medicine.wisc.edu](mailto:mh1@ctri.medicine.wisc.edu)  
Chris Hollenback, 608-262-3902  
[ch3@ctri.medicine.wisc.edu](mailto:ch3@ctri.medicine.wisc.edu)

### **As WI National Guard Prepares for Massive Deployment, Free Help With Quitting Smoking Available to All Troops and Vets**

As the 32nd Brigade of the Wisconsin National Guard prepares for the largest deployment of Wisconsin Guard troops since World War II, the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line stands ready to help them quit tobacco use through an innovative program called Operation Quit Tobacco.

Approximately 34 percent of active troops smoke. More than 30 percent of military smokers start smoking after entering the military, according to the *American Journal of Public Health*.

"This trend is concerning because, during World War II, so many of our troops got hooked on tobacco. It led to a nine-fold increase in lung cancer deaths by 1980," said Dr. Michael Fiore, himself a veteran and now director of the UW Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention.

**History Repeating?** Fiore worries that history could repeat itself now that about 3,500 Wisconsin National Guard troops from 36 Wisconsin communities across the state are preparing to depart in February for Iraq. Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 8,000 Wisconsin guard troops have served on active duty.

"Fortunately, we have a free program to help our troops quit tobacco use," Fiore said. "And that's good news not just for their health—but also for the health of their families."

The Quit Line has already served almost 500 troops via Operation Quit Tobacco. These troops and veterans called the Quit Line at **1-800-QUIT-NOW** (784-8669) and received free, personalized, in-depth coaching on how to quit, plus a two-week starter kit of nicotine patches, or nicotine gum or nicotine lozenges. The quit kits contain information on how to obtain additional medication through U.S. Veterans Administration hospitals, clinics and other military programs.

Operation Quit Tobacco is available to all military personnel—including those on active duty as well as Wisconsin National Guard members, reservists and all Wisconsin veterans. Quit Line coaches follow up with each participant 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 protect our health and well being," Fiore said. "This program is designed to protect theirs."

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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.