

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS (SUDs) & TOBACCO USE



How is tobacco use related to other SUDs?

Adults with a SUD diagnosis are 2-4 times more likely to smoke than someone who doesn't have a SUD. People who smoke and have a SUD smoke more heavily, are more addicted to nicotine, and may find it harder to stop smoking than those who do not have a SUD.

Tobacco use is often paired with other substance use, like alcohol or cannabis. This means that your cravings for tobacco can also increase cravings for other drugs, jeopardizing your recovery. People who smoke tend to have more severe symptoms of a SUD, like increased withdrawal and cravings, and heavier and more frequent use. They also have worse SUD treatment outcomes.

What kinds of health problems can occur when I have a SUD and I smoke tobacco?

Combined, tobacco and other substance use can harm your health more than you might expect. For example, you have a much greater chance of getting cancer of the mouth, throat, and esophagus when you both smoke and drink alcohol.

Like anyone who smokes, you are at greater risk for serious health conditions like COPD, certain cancers, heart disease, and breathing issues. People who use alcohol or other drugs and smoke are more likely to die from their smoking than from their other substance use.

Can I quit smoking while I am in SUD treatment and how will it improve my health?

Yes! Many people in SUD treatment want to quit smoking and can do so, especially with treatment like counseling and medication.

Treatment for tobacco during SUD treatment or early recovery has been shown to increase your odds of long-term abstinence from alcohol and other drugs by 25%.

In fact, stopping smoking during treatment for alcohol use has been linked to reduced drinking and longer abstinence from alcohol.

Other health benefits of quitting smoking include:

- Reduced chronic pain.
- Improved mood and fewer anxiety and depression symptoms.
- Lowered risk of lung disease, certain cancers, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, and other tobacco-related conditions.

I want to stop using tobacco — how do I get started?

- Like other SUDs, it can take multiple tries to stop tobacco use for good. Talk to your VA primary care, SUD, or mental health care provider about medications and counseling to treat your tobacco use.
- 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 (manda VETesp al 47848 para ayuda en español) or visit smokefree.gov/VET.



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Visit mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco

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