



Health Promotion Toolbox

November: Tobacco Free Living Month

Message to Commanding Officers

Tobacco kills more than seven million people worldwide each year, including 480,000 people in the U.S., and is the leading cause of preventable death.^{1, 2} The U.S. Surgeon General advocates a tobacco free lifestyle to prevent cancer, chronic lung disease, heart disease, stroke, and other health issues. For every person who dies from a smoking-related disease, at least 30 more people will suffer from at least one serious disease as a result of smoking.³

Tobacco use is a serious problem in the military and the Department of the Navy (DoN) and can have a serious impact on readiness and the successful completion of military training. Results of recent annual Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Workplace Health Risk Assessment (HRA) reports indicate that tobacco use was higher in the DoN compared to the general U.S. population.⁴ Additionally, 36 to 40 percent of tobacco users in the military started using tobacco while on active duty.⁵ There is good news though: most Sailors and Marines do not use tobacco, and most adult smokers report that they want to quit.⁶

Access the tobacco free living tools and resources by clicking on the blue, underlined, hyperlinked text throughout the document. By incorporating these tips into daily healthy behaviors, Sailors, Marines, their families, and civilian personnel can access the resources they need to support each other and themselves when striving to quit using tobacco.

What Can Leadership Do?

As a Commanding Officer, you play an important role in tobacco cessation among your Sailors and/or Marines

- Set a command climate that promotes a tobacco free lifestyle
- At every opportunity, encourage Sailors, Marines, and civilians to [quit tobacco](#) and recognize those who quit.
- Review current DoD, DoN, and local command [tobacco policy, instructions, and practices](#). Consider not only the lost work time and productivity due to tobacco breaks, but the effects upon non-smoking and non-tobacco using command members and the risks of secondhand smoke exposure. Ensure tobacco policies are being followed and enforced, where you have authority.



- Work with your HRA administrator to have them pull a recent Commanding Officers Report for the HRA to identify the healthy and unhealthy behaviors among your unit, including tobacco use.

You can work with your Health Promotion Coordinator:

- Share information about [secondhand smoke](#) with Sailors, Marines, and civilians so they know the harmful ways it can affect their children and family members.
- Distribute information about programs that can [help Sailors, Marines, civilians, and family members quit tobacco](#), including your local tobacco cessation program, [Defense Department's YouCanQuit2](#), and the [American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout](#) that happens annually on the third Thursday of November.

References

¹ World Health Organization. Tobacco. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs339/en/>.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tobacco-Related Mortality. http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/tobacco_related_mortality/.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/50-years-of-progress/full-report.pdf>. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014.

⁴ Navy Marine Corps Public Health Center EpiData Center Department. Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Workplace Health Risk Assessment Annual Reports. <https://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/hra.aspx>.

⁵ Bondurant S, and Wedge R. editors. Committee on Smoking Cessation in Military and Veteran Populations; Institute of Medicine Combating Tobacco Use in Military and Veteran Populations. http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12632. Published 2009.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Quitting Smoking Among Adults—United States, 2000–2015. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 2017;65(52):1457-64.