



Australian Government
Department of Defence

Tobacco

Defence Mental Health & Wellbeing





*'Mental health and wellbeing is the state in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stress of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community'**

Defence's vision is that our people – military and public servants – experience positive mental health and wellbeing. *They are Fit to Fight – Fit to Work – Fit for Life.*

*World Health Organization

What is tobacco?

Tobacco comes from the leaves of the tobacco plant (*Nicotiana tabacum* and *Nicotiana rustica*). The leaves are dried, cured, aged and combined with other ingredients to produce a range of products such as cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, chewing tobacco, and wet and dry snuff. The leaves from the tobacco plant contain nicotine, which is a stimulant drug. Stimulant drugs act on the central nervous system to speed up the messages travelling between the brain and the body.

What is in tobacco smoke?

There are more than 4000 chemicals in tobacco smoke. Many of these chemicals are poisonous and at least 43 of them are carcinogenic (cause cancer).

The 3 major chemicals in tobacco smoke are:

- nicotine: the chemical on which smokers become dependent
- tar: this is released when a cigarette burns
- carbon monoxide: a colourless, odourless and very toxic gas.

Smokers typically have high levels of carbon monoxide in their blood.

Effects of tobacco

The tar in cigarettes coats the lungs and this can cause lung and throat cancer in smokers. It is also responsible for the yellow–brown staining on smokers' fingers and teeth. The carbon monoxide in cigarettes reduces the amount of oxygen available to the muscles, brain and blood. This means the whole body, especially the heart, must work harder. Over time this causes airways to narrow and blood

pressure to rise, which can lead to heart attack and stroke. High levels of carbon monoxide, together with nicotine, increase the risk of heart disease, hardening of the arteries and other circulatory problems.

Some of the long-term effects of smoking that may be experienced include:

- cancer of the lung, nose, tongue and mouth
- laryngeal and pharyngeal cancers
- myeloid leukaemia, a cancer that affects bone marrow and organs that make blood
- stomach and bladder cancers
- loss of sense of smell and taste
- shortness of breath
- coughing
- chronic bronchitis
- triggering asthma
- emphysema
- increased risk of stroke and brain damage
- heart disease
- blockages in blood supply that can lead to a heart attack
- high blood pressure (hypertension)
- slower healing wounds
- damage to blood vessel walls
- stomach ulcers
- eye cataracts, macular degeneration, yellowing of whites of eyes
- yellow teeth, tooth decay and bad breath
- early wrinkles
- increased likelihood of back pain
- increased susceptibility to infection
- lower fertility and increased risk of miscarriage
- irregular periods
- early menopause
- damaged sperm and reduced sperm
- impotence.

High risk times

Some Defence members increase, or re-start or begin smoking while on deployment or out field. If you are trying to quit, it would be useful to consider and plan for alternate activities and social supports around these times.

E-Cigarettes

E-cigarettes are battery operated devices that turn nicotine infused liquid into an inhalable vapour. There are concerns regarding long term health consequences, quality control and their marketing. It is thought that e-cigarettes may pose

less harm than conventional cigarettes because they do not contain tobacco. However, significant differences in product designs and individual smoking patterns make it difficult to determine the potential level of nicotine toxicity in e-cigarettes. (Alcohol and Drug Foundation).

Myth

Some people believe that smoking 'light' or 'low tar' cigarettes is less harmful than regular cigarettes. However, there is little difference between the amount of chemicals inhaled by people who smoke 'light' cigarettes and those who smoke regular ones.

Health benefits of quitting

You will feel the benefits of quitting straight away as your body repairs itself. Depending on the number of cigarettes you smoke, typical benefits of stopping are:

- After twelve hours almost all of the nicotine is out of your system.
- After twenty-four hours the level of carbon monoxide in your blood has dropped dramatically. You now have more oxygen in your bloodstream.
- After five days most nicotine by-products have gone.
- Within days your sense of taste and smell improves.
- Within a month your blood pressure returns to its normal level and your immune system begins to show signs of recovery.
- Within two months your lungs will no longer be producing extra phlegm caused by smoking.
- After twelve months your increased risk of dying from heart disease is half that of a continuing smoker.
- Stopping smoking reduces the incidence and progression of lung disease including chronic bronchitis and emphysema.
- After ten years of stopping your risk of lung cancer is less than half that of a continuing smoker and continues to decline (provided the disease is not already present).
- After fifteen years your risk of heart attack and stroke is almost the same as that of a person who has never smoked. (<http://www.quitnow.gov.au/>)

Thinking about quitting?

Quitting smoking can be one of the most difficult, yet rewarding things a person can do. Most smokers say they would like to quit, and may have tried at least once. Some are successful the first time, but many other people try a number of times before they finally give up for good.

Evidence suggests that quitting, with the help of nicotine replacement products or quitting medication, is the most effective method of quitting. Research shows that combining two types of support increases the likelihood of success:

1. guidance from a professional advisor or coach to help you manage habits and emotions linked to smoking
2. nicotine replacement products OR quitting medications (both reduce cravings and nicotine withdrawal symptoms).

Where to seek help

If you or someone in your workplace is in crisis and you think immediate action is needed, call **Emergency Services 000**, contact your doctor or local mental health crisis service, or go to your local hospital emergency department.

Emergency contact information – 24 hours

If you or someone you know needs help, call:

- Emergency on **000**
- Lifeline on **13 11 14**
- Suicide Call Back Service on **1300 659 467**.

ADF

Contact your local on base Health Centre, Mental Health Professional or the Duty Officer/Officer of the Day for immediate assistance and referrals.

The ADF Health and Wellbeing Portal is an online health information resource tool for ADF members and their families www.defence.gov.au/health/healthportal/

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support.

Military Chaplains are connected to all ships/units/bases around Australia and on Operations. They can provide all-hours support and appropriate referral. To access Defence Chaplaincy support, call **1300 333 362** and ask to speak to the Duty Chaplain from your area and service.

The ADF Mental Health All-hours Support Line (ASL) is a confidential telephone service for ADF members and their families available 24/7 on **1800 628 036** or if calling from overseas **+61 2 9425 3878**.

If you are away from base, or for out-of-hours assistance, you can call **1800 IMSICK (1800 467 425)** to locate the nearest support.

Defence Family Helpline (1800 624 608) The Defence Family Helpline is available 24/7 for ADF Members and their families, and is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists. Defence Community Organisation website is: **www.defence.gov.au/dco**

The National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC)

Serving Families of Deployed Australian Defence Personnel.

As part of the Headquarters Joint Operations Command, the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) provides a 24 hour support, referral and information service for families of Defence personnel deployed on operations and exercises.

1800 801 026 or **+ 61 2 6127 1812**.

Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO)

SeMPRO offers advice, guidance and support to current and former Defence personnel who have been affected by sexual misconduct, whether the incident is current or historical.

This includes support to ADF cadets, officers and instructors of cadets, APS personnel, commanders, managers, supervisors, support people and families affected by sexual misconduct. **1800 736 776 (1800SeMPRO)**.

Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling (formerly WVC): is a national mental health service that provides 24-hour free and confidential counselling, group programs and suicide prevention training for current and ex-serving ADF members, and their family. To get support or to find out more, call **1800 011 046** or visit **www.OpenArms.gov.au**

APS (and Reservists)

Defence Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (including the Reserve Assistance Program – RAP). The EAP provides short term confidential counselling and support for employees and immediate family members (if eligible). It is easily accessible, voluntary and can provide support on a range of personal and work related issues. The Defence EAP can be accessed by calling **1300 687 327**.