

Tobacco Cessation Coverage TRICARE

What is TRICARE?

TRICARE is the healthcare program for military members and their families. This program is managed by the Defense Health Agency and covers those in active duty along with their families. This program operates both inside the United States and throughout the world wherever military members and their family are sent. A key piece to utilizing this healthcare system is that all care and pharmaceuticals must be acquired from an approved military pharmacy or through mail delivery. TRICARE health plans meet the requirements for minimum essential coverage under the Affordable Care Act.

Tobacco Cessation and TRICARE

Tobacco has a long history with the military in the United States. Starting in 1918, cigarettes were included in daily rations and were not removed until 1975. Even without the daily ration and despite basic training areas being tobacco free, members of the military still smoke at a high rate, many of whom begin after they begin their military service.¹

Members of the military smoke at higher rates than the general population. In 2011, active service members smoked at a rate of 24 percent compared to 19 percent for the civilian population at that time.² Service members who have been deployed are even more likely to smoke than their counterparts.³ Additionally, members of the military use smokeless tobacco at a much higher rate than the general population (12.7 percent to 3.4 percent).⁴ Quitting tobacco is one of the best things a person can do for their health and TRICARE covers many treatments to help smokers quit.



What does this mean?

- TRICARE covers some FDA approved cessation medications;
- NRT (Nicotine Replacement Therapy) Patch, NRT Gum, NRT Lozenge, Bupropion, Varenicline (Chantix)
- The NRT Inhaler and NRT Nasal Spray may be available, depending on the specific military pharmacy location.⁵ Some of these medications are over-the-counter or OTC, meaning a patient does not need a prescription to purchase the medication. However, patients need a prescription from a TRICARE-Authorized provider for any medication, including OTC, in order for the health plan to cover the treatment.
- TRICARE covers all three forms of cessation counseling: individual, group, and phone. However, the type of counseling availability depends on location.
- TRICARE does not impose cost-sharing (including co-pays, co-insurance or deductible) or prior authorization for medications.

Comprehensive Cessation Benefit: Seven Medications:

NRT Gum (OTC*) | NRT Patch (OTC)
NRT Lozenge (OTC) | NRT Inhaler
NRT Nasal Spray | Bupropion
Varenicline (Chantix®)

Three Forms of Counseling: Individual | Group | Phone

¹Secretary of Defense. Policy Memorandum 16-002, Department of Defense Tobacco Policy, April 6, 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/health-promotion-wellness/tobacco-free-living/INCOMING-CARTER-Tobacco-Policy-Memo.pdf>

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Burden of Tobacco Use in the U.S. April 23, 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/resources/data/cigarette-smoking-in-unit-ed-states.html>

³Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Military Service Members and Veterans. June 20, 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/groups/military.html>

⁴Rand National Defense Research Unit. 2015 Health-Related Behavior (HRB) Survey - Active Duty Service Members. Accessed at: <https://www.health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Access-Cost-Quality-and-Safety/Health-Care-Program-Evaluation/Survey-of-Health-Related-Behaviors/2015-Health-Related-Behavior-Survey-Active-Duty>

⁵OTC - Over the counter; Generally these products are available without a prescription. In order to get have them covered, a prescription is necessary.