

# Tobacco's grip on U.S. veterans

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(HealthDay)—Nearly 40 percent of U.S. military veterans smoke or use some form of tobacco.

Data from 2010-2015 revealed that 21.6 percent of veterans reported current use (within the past 30 days) of cigarettes, 6.2 percent used cigars, 5.2 percent used [smokeless tobacco](#), 3 percent used roll-your-own tobacco, and 1.5 percent used pipes, according to a new report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Tobacco use was higher among veterans than non-veterans for males and females across all age groups, except for males 50 and older.

Among veterans, current tobacco use was highest among those: with no health insurance (60 percent); living in poverty (54 percent); ages 18 to 25 (57 percent); with serious mental distress (48 percent); with a family income of less than \$20,000 (44 percent); and with less than a [high school diploma](#) (38 percent).

Tobacco use among current and former [military personnel](#) was associated with high medical costs. In 2010, the Veterans Health Administration spent \$2.7 billion on smoking-related ambulatory care, prescription drugs, hospitalization, and [home health care](#), the report found.

The findings appear in the Jan. 12 issue of the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

"These findings highlight the importance of further protecting the health of our military veterans," said Corinne Graffunder, director of the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health.

"We must redouble our efforts to help veterans quit and reduce the preventable suffering and premature death caused by tobacco use," she said in an agency news release.

More than one-third of active duty U.S. military personnel who smoke

took up the habit after enlisting, so it's important to provide effective [tobacco](#) prevention programs for both current and former military members, according to the CDC.

**More information:** The American Cancer Society offers a [guide to quitting smoking](#).

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