

Smoking rates much higher among the mentally ill

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On average, more than a third of people with psychiatric woes smoke, and they're less likely to quit.

(HealthDay)—The smoking rate for American adults with mental illness is 70 percent higher than for those without such problems, U.S. health officials reported Tuesday.

Overall, 36 percent of adults diagnosed with a [mental health](#) issue smoke, compared to 21 percent among the general population, according to the report from the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the Substance Abuse and [Mental Health Services](#) Administration.

Among adults with [mental illness](#), cigarette smoking rates are especially high among younger adults and people living in poverty or with lower levels of education, the CDC said.

More must be done to help this population break free of tobacco, said CDC Director Dr. Thomas Frieden.

"Smokers with mental illness, like other smokers, want to quit and can quit," he said in an agency news release. "Stop-smoking treatments work and it's important to make them more available to all people who want to quit."

Rates of smoking among adults with mental illness vary widely among states, ranging from about 18 percent in Utah to almost half (48.7 percent) of those surveyed in West Virginia.

On average, adults with mental illness also smoke more cigarettes per month than smokers without mental illness (331 vs. 310 cigarettes), and smokers with mental illness are less likely to quit smoking.

The report is based on an analysis of SAMHSA's 2009-2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. In the report, mental illness was defined as having a diagnosable mental, behavioral or emotional disorder—excluding developmental and substance use disorders—over the past year.

"Special efforts are needed to raise awareness about the burden of smoking among people with mental illness and to monitor progress in addressing this disparity," SAMHSA Administrator Pamela Hyde said in the news release.

To address the issue, SAMHSA has partnered with the [Smoking Cessation](#) Leadership Center to develop ways that mental health facilities and organizations can help patients stop smoking. The CDC is also involved in efforts to help people with mental illness quit smoking.

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and illness in the United States and causes an estimated 443,000 deaths a year in the nation.

The findings are published in the February issue of the CDC's *Vital Signs*.

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

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