SALUTE TO HEALTH

TOBACCOFREEFLORIDA.COM

As Veterans Day Approaches, It's Worth Talking About Tobacco

By Lacoadia Burkes,
Bureau Chief, Tobacco Free Florida

(NAPS)—As Veterans Day approaches, many of us will spend time celebrating the veterans in our lives.

Across our state, that might mean attending a community event, reconnecting with old friends, or simply enjoying a day with family.

It's also a good time to talk about an issue that continues to affect many veterans and the people who care about them: tobacco use.

Nearly 1.4 million veterans call Florida home, giving us one of the country's largest veteran populations. While the adult smoking rate has dropped dramatically over the past few years, veterans continue to be more likely to use tobacco products, and face unique issues when it's time to quit. Veterans Day can also be an opportunity to focus on something important for the years ahead: becoming tobacco free.

How did we get here?

Like many public health issues, there isn't one simple answer. For generations, tobacco use was woven into military culture, and tobacco companies spent millions aggressively promoting their products to military personnel through sponsorships, special events, and other marketing efforts. Many veterans who smoke today first started while serving.

But Veterans Day isn't really about looking backward. It's about the people who are with us today, and the opportunities still ahead.

That's one reason I encourage veterans and their families to think about quitting tobacco.

Most people already know smoking is bad for their health. What often surprises people is how tobacco can affect issues many veterans are already managing. Smoking can worsen chronic pain, interfere with sleep, and create additional challenges for people dealing with stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, or other mental health concerns. Veterans with service-related disabilities are more likely to use tobacco products, and tobacco can also affect how well certain medications work.

The encouraging news is that quitting can start paying off sooner than many people realize.

Breathing and circulation begin to improve immediately. Many people notice food tastes better and their sense of smell improves. Over time, the benefits continue to add up.



Lacoadia Burkes, Bureau Chief, Tobacco Free Florida

And for many people, the biggest motivation isn't found in a health statistic.

Maybe it's putting money back into the household budget. Maybe it's having more energy for children or grandchildren. Maybe it's being there for a future graduation, wedding, family vacation, or all those ordinary moments that matter just as much. Quitting tobacco can also help protect loved ones from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.

If you're thinking about quitting, remember that you don't have to do it alone. Many successful quitters lean on family members, friends, health care providers, and proven quit tools to help them along the way. And if you've tried before, don't be discouraged. Many people make more than one quit attempt before becoming tobacco free for good. Every attempt teaches you something and brings you one step closer to success.

Here at Tobacco Free Florida, we're committed to helping. Through Salute to Health, veterans, active-duty service members, and their families can access educational resources and information about free tobacco cessation support available throughout Florida. Tobacco Free Florida's Quit Your Way services include phone, web, and group quit support options, along with nicotine replacement therapy for eligible participants.

This Veterans Day, if you're ready to take that next step, or if there's someone in your life you're hoping to enjoy more years and more memories with, know that support is available.

You can do it. We can help.

To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida's free Quit Your Way services and the Salute to Health initiative, visit TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/Veterans or call 1-877-U-CAN-NOW (1-877-822-6669).