



Mental Illness and Tobacco

“People with mental illness are two to four times as likely to smoke as those without mental illness. Patients with mental illnesses can successfully quit.” The American Academy of Family Physicians.

Community Use

- People with mental illness have a higher prevalence of smoking. ¹
- Rates of smoking are two to four times higher among people with psychiatric disorders and substance use disorders. ²
- Smoking is a health issue of major concern for people with mental illness, this population consumes 34% of all cigarettes in the U.S. ³
- In the U.S., 60% of current smokers have had a mental health diagnosis sometime in their lifetime. ²
- Among current smokers, the most common current (within the last 30 days) mental health diagnoses are:⁴
 - Σ Alcohol abuse
 - Σ Major Depressive Disorder
 - Σ Anxiety disorders: simple phobias and social phobias
 - Σ Substance Abuse

Tobacco’s Effect on the Community

- Persons with mental illness have a *higher risk of illness and death* than the general population, due in part to higher tobacco use. ⁵
- Persons with mental illness are more nicotine dependent than the general population. ^{2, 6}



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Attitudes about Cessation

- As with the general population, there is ample evidence that persons with mental illness want to *quit* smoking, want information about cessation resources, and can successfully quit. ^{7,8}
- Although providing cessation treatment to persons with mental illness is more complex, evidence-based *cessation programs are effective* for this population. ⁹
- There are no clear guidelines as to when to introduce treatment for nicotine dependence during treatment for mental illnesses.
 - There is evidence that nicotine dependence treatment may improve recovery outcomes from alcohol and other substances. ^{10,11}
 - There is increasing evidence to treat the mental disorder before attempting to treat nicotine dependence. ^{3,9}

Marketing and Targeting Information

- The tobacco industry has marketed their product to the homeless and persons with mental illness and has attempted to maintain a positive image and public support among homeless shelters and advocacy groups. The tobacco industry offered free samples of their products to mental hospitals, homeless shelters, and homeless service organizations. ¹²

Demographic Information

- In North Carolina, 5% of all adults and children live with a serious mental illness. ^{13, 14}



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