

Hawaii Tobacco Cessation Programs - A Valuable TRICARE Benefit

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Few civilian healthcare plans can compare to the free tobacco cessation benefit offered by the military services for Department of Defense's military health system beneficiaries.

Each O'ahu medical treatment facility offers a Tobacco Cessation Program comprised of classroom education and pharmacy support to ease the side effects of nicotine withdrawal. Tobacco cessation programs are administered in accordance with the American Cancer Society's Fresh Start Program and provide education on behavioral modification techniques to help individuals overcome the effects of tobacco use.

The Hawaii medical treatment facilities recently added a relatively new medication, Varenicline (Chantix) to their formulary for beneficiaries enrolled in a smoking cessation program. In clinical trials, patients treated with Varenicline were more successful than patients treated with Zyban. This medication stimulates brain receptors to release dopamine while at the same time blocking activation of these receptors by nicotine.

Based on poor long term success by pharmacological intervention alone, the use of this medication is limited to beneficiaries participating in a formal tobacco cessation program.

A formal program has been found to assist beneficiaries in employing effective behavior modification and coping strategies via a group support environment increasing long term success in kicking the tobacco habit. In addition to Varenicline, Zyban and nicotine replacement therapy are options for most individuals who participate in formal programs.

All military health system beneficiaries regardless of service affiliation or TRICARE program (Prime, Standard or TRICARE for Life) are authorized to enroll in tobacco

cessation programs at military treatment facilities. For additional information on schedules or class location, please contact the health promotion activities at Naval Health Clinic Hawaii (Makalapa or Kaneohe Bay Clinics) – 473-1880 ext. 2282/2283; Tripler Army Medical Center, 433-1498; Schofield Barracks – 433-8675; or Hickam Air Force Base – 448-6170.