



## Short Safety Subject

Short Safety Subjects are provided by the Public Safety Business Center, Fort Bragg, NC. Our intent is to provide safety topics for the purpose of increasing safety awareness and improving safety performance. Additional Short Safety Subjects are available on the PSBC Business Management Web Site at:

[www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm](http://www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm)

### Smoking Cessation



All forms of tobacco use have ill effects on an individual's health, and smoking remains the leading cause of death and disability in the United States. Most people realize that smoking is associated with cancer, heart disease, stroke, and many respiratory diseases; however, young soldiers think this association involves only older people, and many feel invulnerable to these problems.

Current research on smoking finds interesting associations linking smoking to a wide variety of other unhealthy states. One of these is the relationship between smoking and injuries.

A year 2000 study on basic trainees at Fort Jackson shows that there is an increased likelihood of injury for both male and female soldiers if those soldiers smoked before they came in the Army. Current policy does not allow recruits to smoke in basic training, which makes the association with injury even more surprising. In other words, the liability associated with smoking can still be measured up to eight weeks after cessation of smoking.

In the study at Fort Jackson, men who had been smokers before coming into the Army were more than 3 times as likely to sustain an injury that resulted in time lost from basic training than their non-smoking counterparts. The likelihood of injury among women who had been smokers was twice that of non-smokers. The finding that smoking is an independent risk factor for injury has been reported in at least eight other studies. It has also been found that older smokers in the military have reduced aerobic capacity that impacts their ability to do long-term physical work.

Some people might ask how smoking can be related to injuries. The link between smoking and injury still needs to be determined. One possible explanation is the known effects of tobacco weakens the immune system and decreases the effectiveness of wound healing, thereby making an individual more susceptible to injury during rigorous activity like basic training.

#### How far have we come?

Since the Army first published AR 600-63, *Army Health Promotion*, in November 1987, and took an active stand to discourage tobacco use, how far have we come? In 1980, soldiers who smoked made up 54 percent of the Army. In 1998, this number was reduced to 31 percent. Although this represents significant progress, in 1999, only 23 percent of the adult population smoked in the United States. The Army is still higher than the national norm.

Currently smoking in the Army is actively discouraged. The research that shows how smoking impacts readiness makes smoking a command issue. All soldiers and their family members should be given support in efforts to stop tobacco use.

We should all be willing to assist those among us who need encouragement and support in their efforts to stop smoking. Not surprisingly, research results show that smoking poses short-term, as well as long-term effects on the health of our soldiers throughout their life, thereby having a negative effect on readiness.