

# It's okay to ask for help.

**It is important to remember that asking for help is a normal part of life. You should never feel you must take on the world alone.**

**If you are concerned you or someone in your life may be resorting to tobacco to cope, there are resources available to help.**

The Mississippi Tobacco Quitline is a telephone and online support service for any Mississippi resident who is ready to quit tobacco. Using proven techniques tested over 25 years, their program has helped millions of people, and it can help you, too. Get started today and connect with one-on-one support to beat urges, manage withdrawal symptoms, and switch up your habits so you can enjoy life tobacco-free. For hours of operation and services offered, visit [quitnow.net/ms](http://quitnow.net/ms).

The ACT Center for Tobacco Treatment, Education and Research provides counseling and medications. Research shows strong connections between seclusion and negative mental health. The isolation brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has left many people with increased levels of anxiety, loneliness and depression, leading to further reliance on tobacco.

**Mississippi  
tobaccoQUITLINE**  
**1.800.QUITNOW**  
[WWW.QUITNOW.NET/MS](http://WWW.QUITNOW.NET/MS) 1.800.784.8669

 **UMMC**  
ACT Center for Tobacco Treatment,  
Education and Research

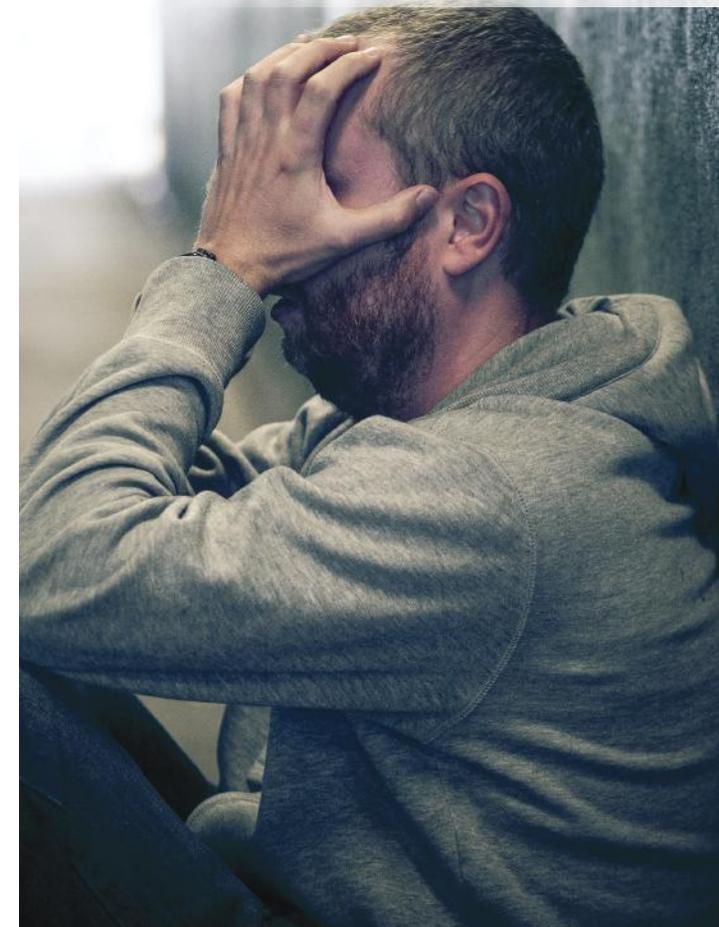
601.815.1180 [act2quit.org](http://act2quit.org)

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EOE/F/M/VETS/DISABILITY

# COPING During the PANDEMIC



**INSTITUTE FOR DISABILITY STUDIES**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

**Many people with disabilities or a mental health diagnosis are having difficulty getting access to support services, especially during the pandemic. Because of this, many are turning to “self-medication” with tobacco products.**

### **Devastating Consequences**

The devastating consequences of tobacco use among the general population is significant. But this problem is made even worse for people with mental illnesses or who have disabilities. Smokers have an increased risk for cancer and lung disease, and they are more likely to die 25 years sooner.



### **Smoking’s Effect on Mental Health**

Approximately 25% of adults in the United States have some form of mental illness or substance use disorder (SUD). These same individuals also consume almost 40% of all cigarettes smoked by adults.

**Smoking can have a direct effect on a person’s mental health, such as:**

- risk factor for developing major depression
- greater likelihood of psychiatric hospitalization
- increased suicidal behaviors
- increased risk of relapsing into drug and/or alcohol abuse
- reduced effectiveness of some psychiatric medications

**However, quitting smoking has huge benefits:**

- reduced mood/anxiety or alcohol-use disorders
- supports behavioral health treatments
- reduced depression, anxiety and stress
- lowers risk of certain illnesses/conditions (ex. heart attack and cancers)

### **Tobacco “Self-Medication” Myths**

The self-medication myth argues individuals with mental illness smoke to ease their symptoms. Some tobacco companies even funded research in support of this claim. However, many studies say smoking can worsen symptoms of mental illness in addition to being a gateway to other even more dangerous self-medication.

Some of the barriers to discussing tobacco cessation with the substance use and mental illness community are myths:

## **MYTHS**

1. Quitting worsens recovery from mental illness or substance use.
2. Tobacco is a necessary self-medication.
3. People in this community are not interested in quitting.
4. Even if they are interested, they can’t quit.
5. It is a low priority problem among healthcare providers for this community.