

Operation Tobacco Free Marine



**MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS BASE BARSTOW, CA,
UNITED STATES**

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Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow

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With successful results, Operation Tobacco Free Marine gains momentum aboard Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Calif.

"Two Marines recently quit," said Shelley Lamey, Semper Fit Gym director. "It's been six months now. One used chewing tobacco and the other was a smoker. Both were very heavy tobacco users and heavily addicted. We went through the program together on their time."

One of the first steps they took was to undergo a carbon monoxide test during every class session.

"This is a serious scare to people," Lamey said. "People get to see what little oxygen is in their body and how high the percentage of cancer-causing toxins are. That is often the biggest reality check and motivator to quit."

Operation Tobacco Free Marine is a Headquarters Marine Corps sponsored tobacco cessation program designed to help members of the Marine Corps quit tobacco completely. Written and designed by former tobacco users, the program helps those who want to become former tobacco users, themselves.

"The curriculum is an evidence-based intervention program, with collaborations from Florida State University's College of Medicine Tobacco Treatment Specialist Program and the Smoking Cessation Clinic for the Tampa Veterans' Affairs Medical Center," Lamey said. "The commitment is intended to help people quit tobacco and to positively impact the health and well-being of military families. This is done with technical assistance and a goal to ease the burden of illness, death and economic costs associated with Marines' tobacco use."

Health and Fitness Directors around the Marine Corps were given intense certifications by the University of Florida whereby they have become licensed practitioners as Tobacco Treatment Specialists.

"We were educated on the entire evidence-based program and went through the curriculum ourselves," she said. "The program includes various nicotine replacement therapies. There are facilitator and student handbooks with exercises, ready-to-use tools, coaching, interacting, resources, problem-solving, home assignments, carbon monoxide testing and follow-up, regular contact via phone and texts from me throughout the program. It is very interactive and powerful."

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The program can be used based on the participant's schedule. They can practice various parts of the program anytime, any day, anywhere. Lamey has slotted times on her calendar for Mondays, but has done it during fluctuating hours in order to accommodate the Marines' schedules.

"For the two Marines I recently helped, they came to my Human Performance Office, where we did the class work and exercises," Lamey said. "I also had them both do nicotine replacement therapy, using medication, patches and gum or lozenges, which help the nicotine withdrawals. They also help people come down off the cravings in order to stay tobacco free. We did other things, as well, with app resources, calls and things to occupy your hands, or typical patterns associated with tobacco use. I am so proud of both of them and they still have never had a slip yet!"

One of the tools she recommends in helping to combat tobacco addiction is maintaining a physically active lifestyle. An active lifestyle is a healthy way to control weight and take people's minds off of tobacco.

"Exercise increases your energy, promotes self-confidence, releases endorphins that manage stress, improves body composition, improves your circulation, lung capacity, heart strength and cellular repair with newly oxygenated blood," she explained. "People also notice improved sleep patterns, increased metabolic expenditure, just to name a few benefits."

In addition, while smoking raises blood pressure, exercise, on the other hand, helps bring blood pressure down. Smoking also increases plaque which clogs arteries, but exercise slows that process down, Lamey explained.

"Exercise also helps to heal your body once you quit tobacco use," she said. "Diet is equally important. Eating foods high in vitamins and minerals, whole grains, lean meats, green leafy vegetables, low-fat dairy products, fruits that are high in antioxidants, all help to keep you energized, satisfied and help to manage weight while giving much-needed nutrients to the body."

Lamey focuses on stress-management techniques, nutritional counseling and guidance, various work out exercise ideas for home and work. She also covers the barriers that keep some people from quitting. In addition, the program is designed to address family support, financial stresses, nicotine withdrawal strategies, tracking cravings, relapse and coping strategies.

"Tobacco use is the single greatest cause of preventable diseases and deaths in the United States," Lamey said. "In fact, one in every five deaths that occur each year in the United States is a result of smoking. Most of the diseases and deaths directly attributable to tobacco use are related to cancers, lung diseases, and cardiovascular diseases."

Tobacco use also has a direct and immediate impact on the military and Department of Defense.

"Tobacco use has a detrimental effect on military readiness and effectiveness," she said. "It has a significant impact on physical fitness and endurance. Tobacco use leads to higher rates of absenteeism and reductions in productivity. It can also lead to millions of dollars in healthcare expenses which could have been prevented. Annually, DOD spends more than \$1.6 billion on tobacco-related medical care, hospitalization and lost work days."

"Of the branches of military service, the use of smokeless tobacco products is highest among Marines at 21.3 percent," Lamey said. "The rate of smoking is highest with deployment 27 percent. More than 80 percent of military personnel reported using tobacco products to 'relax or calm down' and 81.5 percent use it to 'help relieve stress'."

The bottom line is, tobacco use is a proven addiction, and one of the reasons people continue to use any addictive substance, is out of avoidance of the withdrawal symptoms, explained Dawn Dialon, Substance Abuse Program counselor aboard MCLB Barstow.

"Nicotine withdrawal is very real," Dialon said. "It's why so many smokers try many times before they finally quit for good. Nicotine affects all areas of your body, from your heart and blood vessels to your hormones, metabolism, and brain. When you don't have it anymore, you go through physical withdrawal. You'll physically crave that nicotine hit and become irritable if you can't have it. While physical withdrawal usually lasts only a month or so, you could be fighting the mental battle against tobacco for a long time. Nicotine withdrawal involves physical, mental, and emotional symptoms. The first week, especially days 3 through 5, is always the worst. That's when the nicotine has finally cleared out of your body and you'll start getting headaches, cravings, and insomnia. When you get over that hump, the physical

symptoms will start to go away, then you may still be dealing with mental and emotional challenges such as anxiety, depression, and irritability. Those will also taper off after a few weeks."

"With the help of this credible and successful program, I am here to help those who want to quit using tobacco permanently," Lamey said. "I will go anywhere on base, whenever they need me, to help conduct these classes and to get them the help and support they need to get through the withdrawals, and on the right path to living a healthier lifestyle."

"Take that first step, and call Shelley Lamey at 760-577-6817. The help you need to quit tobacco for good is literally one phone call away."

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