

HOW SMOKING HARMS YOUR VISION



Smoking is the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States. It harms nearly every organ in your body – including your eyes.

SMOKING AND CATARACTS

Cataracts (clouding of the eye's natural lens) are a leading cause of blindness in the world. More than 50 percent of Americans will have a cataract or have had cataract surgery by age 80.

People who smoke **double their chance of forming cataracts**, and the risk increases the more you smoke.

SMOKING AND MACULAR DEGENERATION

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) affects the center of the retina, which is responsible for sharp, central vision needed for everyday tasks such as reading and driving. Macular degeneration causes "blind spots" and can severely impair central vision.

Smokers can have a **three-fold increase** in AMD risk, compared with people who have never smoked. And female smokers over 80 are 5.5 times more likely to develop AMD than non-smokers of the same age.

SMOKING AND UVEITIS

Uveitis (inflammation of the eye's middle layer, or uvea) is a serious eye disease that can cause complete vision loss. It harms vital structures of the eye, including the iris and retina, and can lead to complications such as cataract, glaucoma and retinal detachment.

Smokers are more likely than non-smokers to have uveitis. One study found smoking was associated with a **2.2 times greater than normal risk** of having the condition.

SMOKING AND DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

Diabetic retinopathy damages the blood vessels of the retina and can result in vision loss.

More than 5 million Americans 40 and older have diabetic retinopathy due to type 1 or type 2 diabetes. And that number will grow to about 16 million by 2050.

Smoking may as much as **double the risk of developing diabetes**. There also is a causal relationship between smoking and both the development and progression of diabetic retinopathy.

SMOKING AND DRY EYES

Dry eye sufferers have insufficient tears, which are needed to keep the eye lubricated and healthy. They experience itchiness, redness, a "foreign body" sensation and even watery eyes.

Tobacco smoke is a known eye irritant and worsens dry eye – even among second-hand smokers – particularly for contact lens wearers. Smokers are nearly **twice as likely to have dry eyes**.

SMOKING AND INFANT EYE DISEASE

Women who smoke during pregnancy transmit dangerous toxins to the placenta, potentially harming the unborn child. Smoking while pregnant increases the chance of many fetal and infant eye disorders.

These include strabismus (crossed eyes) and underdevelopment of the optic nerve, a **leading cause of blindness in children**.

Also, women who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to give birth prematurely; all premature babies are at risk for retinopathy of prematurity, a potentially blinding disease.

ARE YOU READY TO QUIT?

It's never too late. Quitting smoking at any age can reduce your risk for many sight-threatening eye conditions.

Visit www.smokefree.gov to get started, or see your doctor, who can recommend other methods to help you have a smoke-free life.



This fact sheet was excerpted from www.allaboutvision.com/smoking/. Please see the article for more complete information.

© 2019 AAV Media, LLC. This page may be reproduced for noncommercial education purposes. Use of this information is governed by the AllAboutVision.com Terms of Use (www.allaboutvision.com/terms.htm).