

Effect of Tobacco Use on Vision

- * Increased risk of **macular degeneration**, something more typically seen as people age, which can lead to blindness.
- * **Cataracts** (the milky substance that covers the seeing portion of the eye) develops at a faster rate in smokers.
- * The **children of mothers** who smoked while pregnant show a higher rate of eye defects, like **esotropia (crossed eyes)** and vision impairment.
- * **Reduced night vision.** Nicotine constricts the blood vessels in the eye, reducing the amount of oxygen delivered to ocular tissues, which decreases the ability of the eye to adapt quickly in changing light conditions. It also takes longer to regain regular vision in the light for a smoker than for a non-smoker.
- * Nicotine decreases the production of tears, causing **dry eyes.** A smoker's exposure to toxic airborne particles in cigarette smoke causes extra irritation because normal eye lubrication can't flush away the concentration of particles that comes from smoking. This can also lead to discomfort with contact lenses.
- * Increased development of infections and inflammation in the cornea, which can cause scarring and **vision loss.**
- * Smokers can also suffer from eye-related complications and thyroid eye, which is also referred to as **Grave's disease.** Some of the symptoms are protrusion of the eyeball, double vision, optic nerve disease and inflammation.
- * Smoking reduces the flow of oxygen to the eye's blood vessels and impacts retinal cells, which can **diminish peripheral vision** and make the field of vision narrower.
- * A higher risk of retinal vein occlusion, where a vein carrying blood to the eye is blocked, which can lead to **partial or full blindness.**
- * In general, smoking has been found to raise the pressure in the eye, and can be a risk factor in the development of **glaucoma**, which can gradually reduce one's vision.
- * **Tobacco Amblyopia** is the loss of sharpness of vision, and the reduced ability to tell the difference between colours, which can be made worse by other poor lifestyle choices, like bad diet, and too much alcohol.

Adapted from tobacco info.ca August 2012.

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