



# **Smoking and the health of your eyes**



**quit.org.au**

# Smoking affects your whole body including your eyes.

If you smoke, you increase your risk of loss of sight and blindness. This can impact your quality of life, affecting driving, reading and recognising faces. There is no safe level of smoking.

**If you smoke you are more likely to develop eye health problems** because:

- › Cigarettes contain thousands of chemicals that enter the bloodstream, damaging blood vessels throughout the body including the eyes.
- › These chemicals can cause damage to the macula and retina at the back of the eye, which may then affect eyesight.

**The good news is your body starts to recover the day you stop smoking.**

It is very important to visit your eye health professional regularly to discuss the health of your eyes and seek advice on stopping smoking.

**Stopping smoking  
can **reduce your  
risk** of developing  
eye problems that  
threaten your sight.**

## If you smoke, you are more likely to develop:

### Age-related macular degeneration (AMD)

- › AMD affects the centre of your vision, making it harder to drive, read and watch TV. It often develops slowly with age, you may not notice it at first. Stopping smoking reduces your chance of developing AMD.

### Cataracts

- › A cataract is a clouding of the lens inside the eye which may result in blurring of vision. Early on, cataracts may be managed by getting new glasses when needed. If glasses do not help, you may need surgery. Stopping smoking can help prevent cataracts from getting worse.

### Infected and inflamed eyes

- › This includes dry eye and contact lens-related problems. These conditions can cause redness, pain and blurry or decreased vision.

→ **Second-hand cigarette smoke irritates the eyes of people who do not smoke.**

**It causes many symptoms including stinging eyes, burning or prickling sensations, watery eyes and redness.**

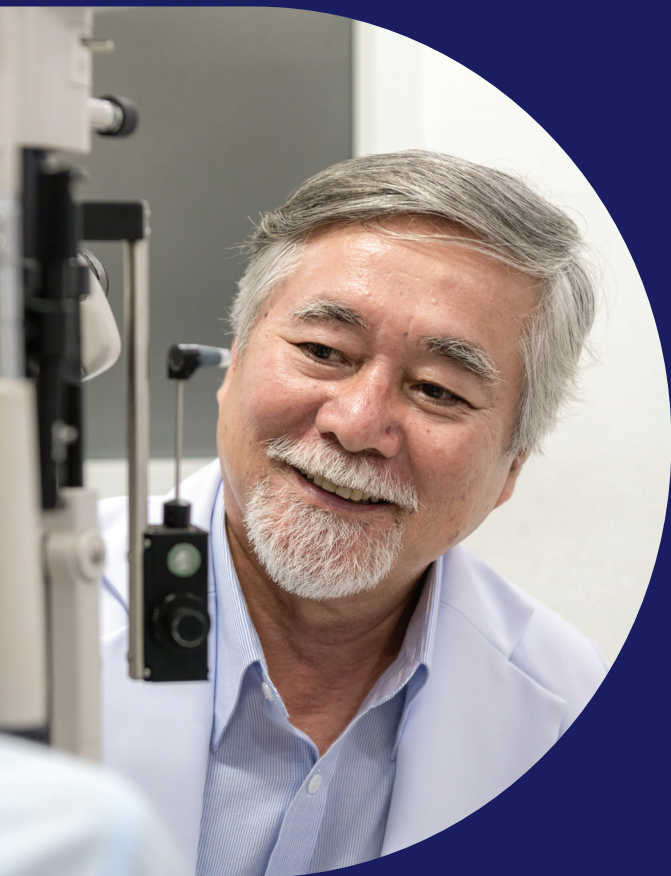


**'Many people are not aware that tobacco smoking causes damage to their eyes. Stopping smoking is important for your general health, as well as your vision and eye health.'**

Associate Professor  
Laura Downie

# When you stop smoking...

- › Your eyes are **not exposed** to tobacco smoke any more, which **helps prevent or slow down further damage**.
- › You **reduce your risk** of vision loss from age-related **macular degeneration** and **cataracts**.
- › The eyes of the **people around you** are **no longer affected** by second-hand smoke.



# For advice or practical help

Your eye health professional, general practitioner (GP) and pharmacist are trained to support you. Your GP or pharmacist can help you decide if you want to use stop smoking medication to help manage your cravings. Some of these medications are cheaper with a script from your doctor.



Quitline counsellors can help build your motivation and skills to help you break free from smoking or vaping. Quitline is free and confidential. You can also ask your eye health professional or GP for a referral for Quitline to call you.

## To contact Quitline:

- › Call **13 7848**
- › Ask Quitline to **call you back** for **free** at **[quit.org.au/callback](https://quit.org.au/callback)**



There are more ways to contact Quitline including **webchat**, **WhatsApp** and **Messenger**. Scan the QR code or visit **[quit.org.au/quitline](https://quit.org.au/quitline)**

**Visit [quit.org.au](https://quit.org.au)**

Please note this information is for general use only.  
Please consult your health professional for further advice.

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