

Smoking and Blindness

How can smoking affect your eyesight?

It can cause blindness!

Many people don't realise that smoking can cause or worsen several eye disorders, particularly Cataract and Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD), and may lead to blindness.

Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) affects the small central area of the retina at the back of the eye which is responsible for clear, central vision. AMD causes the loss of central vision meaning everyday activities such as reading, driving and watching television become impossible.

If you smoke and carry on smoking you more than double the risk of developing age-related macular degeneration when you are older.

AMD is the leading cause of blindness in people over the age of 55 in the western world.

Researchers say that smokers have an increased risk of AMD of two to three-fold compared to someone who does not smoke.

1 in 8 smokers are at risk from this disease and can get AMD at a much younger age than non-smokers. Non-smokers risks are much less, with 1 in 20 at risk from getting AMD.

Cataracts are a clouding over of the lens of the eye and can affect one or both eyes. The result is poor vision, or if untreated, will also lead to blindness. Surgery is usually required to repair the eyes.

Smokers are at a higher risk of getting cataracts. For example, a smoker of 20 or more cigarettes per day is at least twice as likely to develop cataracts. A smoker's risk of cataract increases with the amount smoked. Over half of people over 60 can get cataracts and smokers can get them at a younger age.

