

SMOKING AND DIABETES

There's no point in mincing words... smoking is deadly. There is no safe level of smoking and there are absolutely no health benefits. This is not surprising when you consider the ingredients in cigarette smoke: about 4,000 known toxins, including 50 substances known to cause cancer. Every puff exposes your cells and tissues to such chemicals and poisons as arsenic, acetone, ammonia, carbon monoxide, cyanide, mercury, nicotine and lead.

People with diabetes who smoke face even greater risks. Diabetes itself is a serious disease that carries an already very high risk of heart disease and stroke. Adding smoking to diabetes drastically raises this risk and the risk of other diabetes complications, further shortening life expectancy and decreasing quality of life.

Many people with diabetes work very hard to control their blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol in order to prevent complications of diabetes such as heart attack and stroke. Unfortunately, smoking simply undoes all this hard work.

Smoking increases the already high health risks associated with diabetes:

- > **Heart attack or stroke:** smoking reduces the amount of oxygen available for tissues. This can lead to heart attacks and strokes. People with diabetes who smoke are three times more likely to die of heart attack or stroke than people with diabetes who do not smoke.
- > **Blood glucose:** smoking raises blood glucose.
- > **Blood pressure:** smoking raises blood pressure.
- > **Cholesterol:** smoking increases some types of cholesterol in blood, increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke.
- > **Infections:** smoking damages blood vessels, making it harder for the body to heal. This increases the risk of infections and amputations.
- > **Kidney and nerve disease:** smoking further increases the risk of these two serious complications of diabetes.
- > **Erectile dysfunction:** smoking can cause problems associated with getting and maintaining an erection.

Unfortunately, as anyone who has tried to quit knows, smoking is an extremely addictive habit. The process of quitting is physically and emotionally difficult. However, it is probably the single most effective thing you can do to improve your health. In fact, your health starts to improve as soon as you quit. If you are serious about kicking the habit, speak to your doctor about how he or she can help.

While quitting will always require lots of motivation and will power, there are numerous smoking cessation aids, support groups, and behaviour modification methods that can help. Many hospitals, community centres and schools offer smoking cessation workshops or clinics. Most importantly, don't give up. On average it takes three attempts to successfully quit. Don't be discouraged if you gain some weight. You can take the extra weight off later and the risks of a few extra pounds are much lower than the risks of continuing to smoke. So, if you don't succeed the first time, keep trying and keep reminding yourself that every puff you take puts your life and those around you at risk. Promise yourself that you will replace a deadly habit with a healthy habit like exercising. Promise the people who love you that you will quit for your sake and theirs.