



Tips From Former Smokers®

Tips From Former Smokers® Home

Vision Loss, Blindness, and Smoking

Overview of Smoking and Eyesight

Smoking is as bad for your eyes as it is for the rest of your body. If you smoke, you can develop serious eye conditions that can cause vision loss or blindness. Two of the greatest threats to your eyesight are:^{1,2}

- Macular degeneration
- Cataracts

Macular degeneration, also called [age-related macular degeneration \(AMD\)](#), is an eye disease that affects central vision. You need central vision to see objects clearly and for common tasks such as reading, recognizing faces, and driving.

There are two forms of AMD: dry AMD and wet AMD. Macular degeneration always begins in the dry form, and sometimes progresses to the more advanced wet form, where vision loss can be very rapid if untreated.³

[Cataracts](#) cause blurry vision that worsens over time. Without surgery, cataracts can lead to serious vision loss. The best way to protect your sight from damage linked to smoking is to quit or never start smoking.⁴

Symptoms of Eye Diseases Related to Smoking


You may think your eyes are fine, but the only way to know for sure is by getting a full eye exam. AMD often has no early symptoms, so an eye exam is the best way to spot this eye disease early. An eye specialist will place special drops in your eyes to widen your pupils. This offers a better view of the back of your eye, where a thin layer of tissue (the retina) changes light into signals that go to the brain. The macula is a small part of the retina that you need for sharp, central vision.

When symptoms of AMD do occur, they can include:^{5,6}

- Blurred vision or a blurry spot in your central vision
- The need for more light to read or do other tasks
- Straight lines that look wavy
- Trouble recognizing faces

Free Quitting Resources


Web

- [Quit Smoking](#)
- [Smokefree.gov](#) 

Smartphone Apps/Text

- [Text QUITNOW to 333888](#)—
Message and data rates may apply
- [quitSTART app](#)—tips, information, and challenges to help you quit

Telephone

- [1-800-QUIT-NOW](#)
- [1-855-DÉJALO-YA](#) (Español [Spanish])
- [Asian Smokers' Quitline](#) 
 - [1-800-838-8917](#) (中文 [Chinese] [Cantonese & Mandarin])
 - [1-800-556-5564](#) (한국어 [Korean])
 - [1-800-778-8440](#) (Tiếng Việt [Vietnamese])



Eye injections are often the preferred treatment for wet AMD. Your doctor can inject a drug to stop the growth of these blood vessels and stop further damage to your eyes. You may need injections on a regular basis to save your vision.

How Does Smoking Affect Your Eyes?

Smoking causes changes in the eyes that can lead to vision loss. If you smoke:

- You are twice as likely to develop AMD compared with a people who do not smoke.^{2,8}
- You are two to three times more likely to develop cataracts compared with a people who do not smoke.⁹

How Can You Prevent Vision Loss Related to Smoking?

If you smoke, stop. Quitting may lower your risk for both AMD and cataracts.^{2,10}

If you already have AMD, quitting smoking may slow the disease.² AMD tends to get worse over time. Quitting smoking is something within your control that may help save your sight. Other healthy habits may also help protect your eyes from cataracts and AMD:^{3,4}

- Exercise regularly.
- Maintain normal blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- Eat a healthy diet rich in green, leafy vegetables and fish.
- Wear sunglasses and a hat with a brim to protect your eyes from sunlight.

How Is a Cataract Treated?

The symptoms of an early cataract may improve with new eyeglasses, brighter lighting, antiglare sunglasses, or magnifying lenses.⁴

When glasses and brighter lighting don't help, you may need surgery. A doctor will remove the cloudy lens and replace it with an artificial lens. This clear, plastic lens becomes a permanent part of your eye.⁴

Help for Vision Loss

Coping with vision loss can be frightening, but there is help to make the most of the vision you have left and to continue enjoying your friends, family, and special interests. If you've already lost some sight, ask your healthcare professional about low-vision counseling and devices such as high-powered lenses, magnifiers, and talking computers.

Additional Resources

For facts about age-related macular degeneration, visit the [National Eye Institute's](#) [AMD Web page](#).

For additional information on AMD prevention and treatment, visit the National Institute of Health's [Macular Degeneration](#) [web page](#).

Marlene K. smoked and started losing her vision at age 56. She's had dozens of shots in each eye to avoid further vision loss.

"Nothing at all—food, drink, cigarettes, nothing—is worth going through what I'm going through."



For eye health information from the American Academy of Ophthalmology, visit the [Eye Smart](#) web site.

The [American Academy of Ophthalmology](#) is the national membership association of Eye doctors. Eye doctors are ophthalmologists, medical and osteopathic doctors who provide comprehensive eye care, including medical, surgical, and optical care.

The [American Society of Retina Specialists](#) (ASRS) web site offers the following resources for consumers:

- Information for patients who have been diagnosed with retina conditions
- Additional resources for patients who need assistance
- Information on the importance of care by a retina specialist

References

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