

Smoking and Your Eyes

For the eye to function properly, a continuous flow of oxygen and nutrients is essential. Smoking compromises this vital supply by narrowing blood vessels and thickening the blood, thereby reducing blood flow to the eyes. Additionally, components present in tobacco smoke increase the risk of eye irritation.

These chemicals can cause tearing and mild conjunctiva redness. Furthermore, smoke stimulates nerve endings, leading to stinging, burning, or prickling sensations in the eyes.



What is in a cigarette?

Tobacco smoke contains as many as 4,000 active compounds, most of which are toxic with short or long-term exposure. More than 60 of these chemicals are carcinogens, and the toxic compounds can cause severe pathological disturbances in various organs, including the eyes. Follow the link below to see a list of the harmful ingredients used in cigarettes.

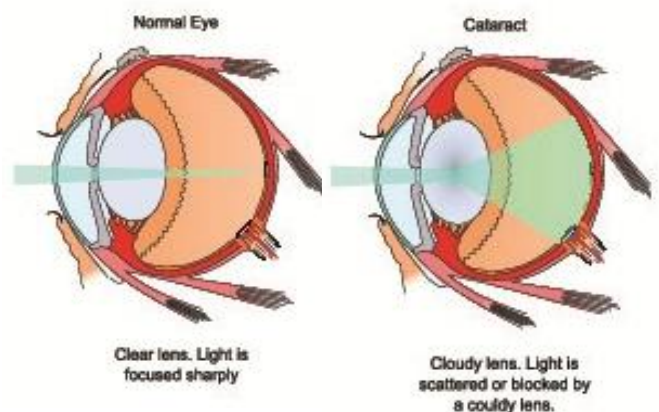
<https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/smoking-facts/whats-in-a-cigarette>

Environment tobacco smoke (ETS)

Cigarette smoking is highly irritating to the conjunctiva, the thin film covering the white of the eye. This irritation affects not only smokers but also non-smokers through passive exposure to second-hand smoke. Eye irritation is the most common complaint resulting from environmental tobacco smoke, followed by symptoms such as cough, nose irritation, and headache.

Smoking and cataracts

Cataracts are a clouding of the lens inside the eye. Everyone will develop cataracts if they live long enough. There is a link between smoking and an increased risk of cataract development. Smokers develop cataracts earlier and more severely.

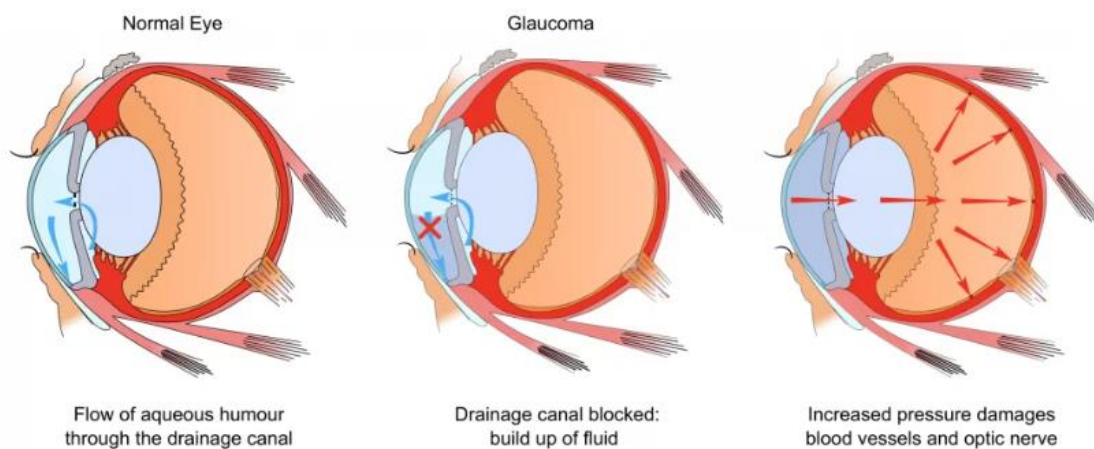


Smoking and Age-related Macular Degeneration

The most common cause of smoking-related blindness is age-related macular degeneration (ARMD). ARMD is a major cause of irreversible vision loss in the Western world, particularly among the elderly. Smoking doubles the risk of developing late-stage ARMD. Even after quitting, the risk of late ARMD remains elevated for up to 20 years.

Smoking and glaucoma

Glaucoma is a degenerative disease of the optic nerve, typically caused by a disturbance in the blood supply to the optic nerve. It is sometimes described as the "sneak thief of sight" because many people are unaware, they have it until significant vision loss has occurred. The retinal nerve fibre layer (RNFL) is the first part of the retina to degenerate as glaucoma onsets. It is significantly affected by smoking. The RNFL collects visual data from the eye's retinal nerves, which direct it to the optic nerve, taking the visual signals to the brain. Smokers have significantly thinner RNFL than non-smokers. Glaucoma can be treated with medication and/or surgery, but early detection is vital, as once sight is lost, it cannot be regained.



Smoking and other eye diseases

Graves' ophthalmopathy, also known as thyroid eye disease, can lead to protrusion of the eyes. In severe cases, it can cause dry eye due to exposure, as well as difficulties or pain with eye movement, and double vision. While the exact cause of Graves' ophthalmopathy is unknown, smoking has been implicated as one of the factors capable of inducing Graves' disease in individuals who are genetically predisposed.

Smoking and strabismus in children

Strabismus, characterized by the turning of one or both eyes, is a common issue among children. It typically requires intervention through methods such as spectacles, patching, exercises, or a combination of these, and in some cases, surgery may be necessary. Smoking during pregnancy has been linked to an increased risk of strabismus in children.



Smoking and contact lenses.

Complications resulting from contact lens wear and smoking have not been extensively studied, but their consequences can be serious. The cornea, the front part of the eye, is a delicate environment. Even small particles like dust or lint on the lens can compromise the corneal surface, raising the risk of eye infection and contact lens-related microbial keratitis.

Smoking has been recognised as a significant factor in contact lens-related microbial keratitis and inflamed corneas. This is because smoking is associated with dry eye, which impairs the immune system and increases the likelihood of contact lens difficulties.



Smoking is linked to an extensive array of health problems, including detrimental effects on vision. If you are a smoker and concerned about your eye health, please reach out to our team today to schedule a consultation. Add us to the list of people who openly support you giving up smoking. For resources on quitting smoking, please follow the link provided below.

https://www.quithq.initiatives.qld.gov.au/how-to-quit?gclid=EAlalQobChMIpPLxp7mK_wIVFMKWCh09nwAdEAAYASAAEgJEnvD_BwE