



The Facts About Smoking and Diabetes

Tobacco has many bad health effects, the best-known is that it causes cancer. But smoking can also aggravate many problems that people with diabetes already face.

- ✓ Smoking increases blood glucose (sugar) levels, making it harder to manage your diabetes. ¹
- ✓ Smoking causes blood vessels to narrow. This damage can worsen foot ulcers and lead to blood vessel disease and leg and foot infections. ²
- ✓ Smoking increases blood pressure, which increases the risk of heart attack or stroke. Diabetics are prone to high blood pressure already. Adding tobacco makes it harder to control the blood pressure, and the extra strain on the heart can cause heart attacks or heart failure. ³
- ✓ Smoking increases the risk of developing nerve damage and kidney disease as well as limited joint mobility. ⁴
- ✓ Smoking causes carbon monoxide to build up in the blood stream, and reduces the blood's ability to carry oxygen. Diabetics have difficulty getting enough oxygen to tissues that need it, resulting in poor resistance to infection and slow wound healing. ³
- ✓ Other deposits build up inside blood vessels as a result of tobacco, which slows down blood flow to tissues. Blood vessels in the heart, brain, eyes, kidneys and legs get clogged - speeding up a diabetic's tendency to suffer damage in those organs. ³
- ✓ Smoking raises your cholesterol levels and the levels of some other fats in your blood, increasing your risk of a heart attack. ²
- ✓ Tobacco can cause infertility, impotence and erectile dysfunction. Diabetics have a hard time getting pregnant and getting or keeping an erection; tobacco makes it worse. ³
- ✓ A diabetic who smokes is three times more likely to die of a heart attack than a diabetic who doesn't smoke. ⁴

The African American Tobacco Education Network (AATEN) is a project of the California Black Health Network, funded through the Tobacco Control Section of the State Department of Health Services. AATEN conducts workshops and seminars on the effects of tobacco use on African Americans and offers mini-grants to support local African American tobacco control projects. Contact us at:

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REFERENCES

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² American Diabetes Association, online posting.

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³ United Tobacco Free Coalition of Montana, online posting.

<http://www.tobaccofreemontana.org/fdiabetes.htm>

⁴ National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, online posting.

<http://www.health.org/seasonal/blackhistory/diabetes.aspx>