Overview

The number of visually-impaired Canadians is projected to double between 2006 and 2031 because of an increase in the incidence of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), cataracts and diabetic retinopathy. Smoking increases the risk of developing these conditions. Stopping smoking can help prevent these diseases.

The Link between Smoking and Eye Health

- People who smoke have up to four times the risk of developing AMD.
- The more people smoke and the longer they smoke, the more likely they are to develop serious cataracts. People who smoked in the past and those who still smoke are at risk for developing cataracts.
- People who smoke 20 or more cigarettes a day are at greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes. People who quit smoking, have a lower risk of developing diabetes than someone who still smokes.
- More than 60% of patients with type 2 diabetes will develop some form of diabetic retinopathy during the first 20 years of disease. Diabetic retinopathy is the term used to describe damage caused by diabetes to the retina, which is the innermost layer of the eye, responsible for sensing light.
- Up to 20% of vision loss from AMD could be avoided if people stopped smoking.
- Both past and current smokers are at risk for cataracts. It is important for people to stop smoking early.
- Quitting smoking reduces the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and helps prevent vision loss from diabetic retinopathy.

Helpful Resources

- Canadian Ophthalmological Society www.eyesite.ca
- Association des médecins ophtalmologistes du Québec www.amoq.org
- The Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology www.arvo.org
References


