

Smoking

Effects on the Body and Eyes

As your eye care provider, I feel it is important to keep you informed on how not only to treat eye disorders, but also how to prevent future disorders. Most people are aware of the hazardous effects on the body from cigarette smoking, but few understand how smoking affects the eye health.

Cigarette smoke contains over 4,700 chemical compounds including 60 known carcinogens which **damage genes** causing numerous **diseases** and **cancers**. Cigarette smoking also increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases (including stroke), sudden death, cardiac arrest, peripheral vascular disease and aortic aneurysms. **Even children** who are exposed to second hand smoke have an increased frequency of respiratory infections, middle ear infections and other disorders.

Smoking also causes oxidative stress that mutates DNA, promotes atherosclerosis and **speeds up the aging process** of the entire body. The body produces antioxidants to help repair damaged cells, but smokers have lower levels of antioxidants in their blood than do nonsmokers. For this reason, it is important for smokers to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and take nutritional supplements which are full of antioxidants.

When carbon monoxide from cigarette smoke binds to hemoglobin in red blood cells, it **reduces** the amount of **oxygen** being transported to the brain and throughout the body. Reduced oxygen in tissues of the body, often lead to nerve damage and abnormal blood vessel growth. This is a cause for worsening of many **eye problems** which lead to partial or complete **blindness**, including glaucoma, cataracts, diabetic eye disease and macular degeneration. Reduced oxygen to the brain also affects night vision sharpness.

The sooner you quit smoking, the more you will reduce your risk of the above listed disorders which can lead to blindness, disability and death to you and others around you. If you desire to **quit smoking** and if you would like assistance please visit your primary care physician to discuss your options. Seek support from your family and friends, to help you manage stress and emotional changes due to stopped smoking.