

## Diabetes and Smoking

---

More than 16 million Americans have diabetes, and the number is growing.<sup>1</sup> A study shows that current smokers are more likely than those who never smoked to get type 2 diabetes.<sup>2</sup> But past smokers generally did not have more of a chance of getting it than nonsmokers.<sup>2</sup> This suggests you can lower your risk for it if you quit smoking.

### About diabetes

Diabetes is a long-term disease. People with it have blood glucose, or sugar, levels that are too high.<sup>3</sup> It occurs when the body can't make or use the hormone, insulin, right.<sup>4</sup> It leads to health problems. **These include:**

- Heart disease<sup>1,3,5</sup>
- Kidney disease<sup>3,5</sup>
- Nerve damage<sup>5</sup>
- Blindness<sup>3,5</sup>

Type 2 is the most common type of the disease. Those who have it often can control their disease with a healthy lifestyle. They can do this by making healthy choices. They can eat a healthy diet. They can get regular exercise. They can lose weight. They may need medicine, too. The other kind, type 1, occurs most often in children. It used to be called insulin-dependent or juvenile diabetes.<sup>3</sup>

### Symptoms of diabetes

**At first, diabetes may not have symptoms. Some people may have<sup>3</sup>:**

- Increased thirst and urination
- Unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Blurred vision

### Health risks

Doctors have long known that the health risks of diabetes are generally worse in those who smoke.<sup>6</sup>

**Compared with nonsmokers with diabetes, smokers with diabetes generally:**

- Need higher doses of insulin because their bodies absorb less of the drug<sup>7</sup>
- Have a risk of heart disease and stroke up to 14 times higher<sup>8</sup>
- Have nerve damage 2 to 12 times more often
- Have a higher risk of amputation<sup>6</sup>
- Tend to develop kidney disease more quickly<sup>3</sup>
- Have more than 2.5 times the risk of fainting and hospitalization due to severe low blood sugar in type 1 diabetes<sup>9</sup>
- Have a higher death rate<sup>7</sup>

## Quit!

Quitting smoking lowers the risk of death in smokers with diabetes.<sup>4</sup> It lowers the amount of smoking-related illnesses, too.<sup>4</sup>

If you have diabetes, be sure to keep up your diabetes self-care when you quit smoking. Check your blood sugar level daily. Eat right. Get regular exercise. Take your diabetes medicine. See your doctor for checkups.

### References:

1. American Diabetes Association. Awareness of diabetes-heart disease link lacking [press release]. Feb. 19, 2008. [http://www.diabetes.org/utills/printthispage.jsp?PageID=MISCELLANEOUS3\\_238792](http://www.diabetes.org/utills/printthispage.jsp?PageID=MISCELLANEOUS3_238792). Accessed March 27, 2008.
2. Foy CG, Bell RA, Farmer DF, Goff DC Jr, Wagenknecht LE. Smoking and incidence of diabetes among US adults: findings from the Insulin Resistance Atherosclerosis Study. *Diabetes Care*. 2005;28(10):2501-2507.
3. Hormone Foundation. Diabetes overview. <http://www.hormone.org/Diabetes/overview.cfm>. Accessed March 27, 2008.
4. American Diabetes Association. All about diabetes. [http://www.diabetes.org/utills/printthispage.jsp?PageID=ALLABOUTDIABETES\\_233165](http://www.diabetes.org/utills/printthispage.jsp?PageID=ALLABOUTDIABETES_233165). Accessed March 27, 2008.
5. American Diabetes Association. Type 2 diabetes. <http://www.diabetes.org/type-2-diabetes.jsp>. Accessed April 9, 2008.
6. Ford SK, Bryant Shilliday BB. Smoking and diabetes: helping patients quit. *Clin Diabetes*. 2006;24(3):133-137.
7. Sherman JJ. The impact of smoking and quitting smoking on patients with diabetes. *Diabetes Spectrum*. 2005;18(4):202-208.
8. Tibbs TL, Haire-Joshu D. Avoiding high-risk behaviors: smoking prevention and cessation in diabetes care. *Diabetes Spectrum*. 2002;15(3):164-169.
9. Hirai FE, Moss SE, Klein BEK, Klein R. Severe hypoglycemia and smoking in a long-term type 1 diabetic population: Wisconsin Epidemiology Study of Diabetic Retinopathy. *Diabetes Care*. 2007; 30(6):1437-1441.