

# Diabetes and SMOKING

Smoking is a killer. It increases the risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke and other diseases. Smoking and diabetes are a particularly deadly combination. Smoking can increase your risk of getting diabetes and can cause serious complications if you already have diabetes.

The Diabetes Federation of Ireland is supporting an initiative to discuss and examine a range of tobacco related issues that was launched in September by ASH Ireland, Irish Cancer Society and Irish Heart Foundation. 'A Tobacco Free Country' is examining progress in achieving a tobacco free society, as announced by the government in 2000.

Some 25% of Irish people still smoke and regrettably 50% of these will die from smoking-related illnesses. The joint initiative will:

- Focus on reducing the numbers of smokers in Ireland
- Tackle the tobacco industry's influence on young people
- Call for a ban on smoking in cars transporting children under 16.

## Key facts

- Smoking increases the risk of healthy adults developing diabetes
- Smoking exacerbates the complications of diabetes
- People with diabetes are at higher risk than the general population of developing cardiovascular disease, and smoking increases this risk significantly
- Smokers with diabetes greatly increase the risk of premature death
- Smoking in pregnancy increases the risk that the baby will develop diabetes later in life
- Stopping smoking helps to prevent and control diabetes

## Increased risk of diabetes

Smoking increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Tobacco smoke contains chemicals which can affect the production of insulin.

Researchers found that middle-aged men who smoke heavily are almost twice as likely to develop diabetes than non-smokers.

Women who smoke have an increased

risk, but it is not as high as men.

Smoking is a risk factor for insulin resistance. This can lead to diabetes. Insulin resistance is a condition where the body cannot properly use the insulin produced and this leads to excess insulin in the blood.

## Smoking, the heart and circulation

People with diabetes suffer from higher rates of heart disease and circulation problems. High blood glucose levels make the blood vessels tighten and harden.

Smoking causes a build up of fatty deposits in the arteries and makes the blood cells become stickier.

Smoking with diabetes increases even more the risk of a blood clot or a blocked artery.

## Heart attacks

The risk of a heart attack is four times higher when a person with diabetes is also a smoker.

## Stroke

The risk of a stroke is almost double for

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a person with diabetes who also smokes.

## Leg ulcers and gangrene

People with diabetes can suffer from poor circulation in the legs and feet. Those who smoke are more likely to get severe problems in the feet such as ulcers and gangrene.

## Impotence

Poor circulation resulting from diabetes can cause male impotence, which is made worse by smoking.

## Hypertension

Smoking increases the risk of hypertension or high blood pressure, but this risk is even higher for people with diabetes.

## Other complications

People with diabetes have a greater risk of problems associated with damage to small blood vessels. These are made worse by smoking.

## Diabetic retinopathy

The small blood vessels supplying the retina are damaged by high blood sugar. Smoking increases the risk of blockage. This can lead to impaired vision and blindness.

## Diabetic kidney damage (nephropathy)

Smoking increases the risk of kidney damage by 40% because it raises blood pressure and the chemicals in tobacco also affect the body's chemicals, which control kidney function.

## Nerve-related problems (neuropathy)

Diabetic damage to the small blood vessels can lead to numbness and pain in the nerves all over the body. Smoking adds a 12-fold increased risk of neuropathy.

## Smoking in pregnancy and diabetes

Smoking during pregnancy can harm the unborn child. Many mothers are unaware that smoking can lead to a four-fold increased risk that their baby will develop type 2 diabetes in later life.

Smoking even a few cigarettes a day when pregnant deprives the baby of

## QUIT TIPS

There is no 'quick fix' to quitting smoking. If you want to give up smoking for good you need to take a closer look at your smoking and understand why you smoke. What are the effects of smoking on your life and your future – good and bad?

You may find that your level of motivation changes from day-to-day depending on your mood and the situations you find yourself in.

Changing your attitude to smoking, making the decision to give up, and changing your lifestyle are important to your success. There are things you can do to help yourself stay focused on your goal to quit smoking for good. It will help if you:

- Take a closer look at your smoking and identify what makes you smoke
- Help find realistic ways to deal with your triggers
- Learn new ways to deal with the difficult (high-risk) situations
- Make a plan of action to help you stop smoking for good
- Figure out ways of living your life without tobacco.

You can set up your own quit plan with email reminders and other supports at [www.quit.ie](http://www.quit.ie)

You can contact the National Smokers' Quitline on callsave 1850 201 203 to speak to an advisor or you can find contact details for your nearest HSE smoking cessation service at [http://www.quit.ie/en/inner/hse\\_smoking\\_cessation\\_service](http://www.quit.ie/en/inner/hse_smoking_cessation_service).

Talk to your doctor. Ask about medications that can help with withdrawal. The medications could affect blood sugar so you need to seek advice before and after stopping.

- Set a quit date and stick to it. Not even a puff!
- Tell friends and family that you want to stop smoking, why it is important and ask for their help.
- Have a plan to cope with cravings. Distract yourself for 5-10 minutes. Try sips of water. Do something else with your hands.
- Change your routines. Avoid people and place you associate with smoking.
- Eat well, have healthy low calorie snacks. Get some exercise as well as relaxation.
- Treat yourself with the money you save.



essential nutrients.

This can result in an inability to cope with a rich, modern diet, which can lead to diabetes.

## Benefits of stopping smoking

The longer someone with diabetes smokes the greater the risk. So the sooner the person quits the better. There is lots of help available to stop smoking.

The benefits of stopping start immediately. Diabetes control should improve so it is best to discuss any possible changes to insulin dosage or other medications with your doctor. Within a short time blood pressure reduces and cholesterol

levels in the blood go down.

Many smokers with diabetes worry about stopping smoking because they fear weight gain. But the benefits of stopping smoking far outweigh any problems of weight gain.

To minimise or prevent weight gain:

- Eat lots of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Reduce the amount of refined carbohydrates and sugars
- Increase physical activity
- Try to do 30 minutes activity a day – walking, swimming, gardening, walking up stairs, dancing...you choose.

With thanks to [www.gasp.org.uk](http://www.gasp.org.uk)