

# Smoking and Diabetes



When you have diabetes, quitting smoking is one of the most important things you can do to help your health. Both diabetes and smoking cause health problems on their own. But together they are more likely to cause serious damage to your blood vessels, eyes, and kidneys. You are at higher risk for early death from problems such as stroke, kidney failure, and heart attack. Smoking raises your risk of having type 2 diabetes in many ways. This includes by increasing the accumulation of "bad" fat around your belly and increasing inflammation all over your body. Smoking during pregnancy even increases the risk of your unborn child having diabetes later in life.

## Knowing your health risks

Smoking when you have diabetes raises your risk for serious health problems. These include:

- **Cardiovascular disease (CVD).** This means disease of the blood vessels and heart. Blood vessels in the body can be blocked with a sticky substance called plaque. It can lead to heart attack or stroke. You may have heart rhythm problems, heart valve problems, or heart failure.
- **Diabetic kidney disease.** This is also known as diabetic nephropathy. Damage to blood vessels in the kidneys causes the kidneys to not work well. The kidneys may then stop working fully. Kidney failure then needs to be treated with dialysis or kidney transplant.
- **Diabetic retinopathy.** This is an eye disease that causes vision problems because of blood vessel damage in the eyes. It can lead to blindness.
- **Peripheral neuropathy.** This is damage to nerves around the body. It can cause sharp pain, a burning feeling, numbness, weakness, and trouble moving.
- **Peripheral artery disease (PAD).** This causes poor blood flow in the legs and feet. It can lead to infections and sores that don't heal well. And it can lead to the need to remove (amputate) toes and feet. PAD in men is also a frequent cause of erectile dysfunction.
- **Blood sugar problems.** Smoking can cause problems with the way your body uses insulin. It can make it harder for you to control your blood sugar levels. You may need larger doses of insulin to manage your blood sugar.

## Making a quitting plan

Quitting smoking can be hard. Make a plan that will help you stay on track. Talk with your friends and family. Talk with your healthcare provider. Talk about the ways to quit and which way may be best for you. Set a quit date for yourself, at a time when your stress will be lower.

## Tools to help you quit

Ask your healthcare provider about methods to help you stop smoking, such as:

- **Nicotine aids.** It may help you to use a patch, gum, lozenge, nasal spray, or inhaler that has nicotine. While using nicotine from any source, you may still have trouble controlling your blood sugar. Don't use e-cigarettes or vaping products.
- **Prescription medicine.** Talk with your healthcare provider about medicines that can help you stop smoking.
- **Alternative therapies.** Hypnosis and acupuncture may help you quit smoking.
- **Other support.** You can sign up for texting services, create a quit plan, and use more tools on [Smokefree.gov](https://www.smokefree.gov) or by calling 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669).

© 2000-2027 The StayWell Company, LLC. All rights reserved. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions  
This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your Healthcare professional's instructions. Copyright Krames LLC.