

How Smoking Can Increase Risk for and Affect Diabetes

Smoking cigarettes increases your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. People who smoke are 30 to 40 percent more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than people who don't smoke. In fact, the more cigarettes you smoke, the higher your risk for type 2 diabetes.

Smoking can cause diabetes by interfering with the normal function of your cells. The chemicals in cigarette smoke harm your body's cells and can cause inflammation throughout the body, which may make your insulin less effective.

When chemicals from cigarette smoke meet oxygen in the body, this process can also cause cell damage, called oxidative stress. Both oxidative stress and inflammation may increase your risk of developing diabetes.

People who smoke have a higher risk of belly fat, which can raise your risk for type 2 diabetes, even if you aren't overweight.

While smoking is a risk factor for developing type 2 diabetes, you can take steps to lower your risk. Talk to your health care provider about the right quit method for you to help reduce your chances of developing type 2 diabetes.

Smoking cigarettes makes managing diabetes more difficult. People with diabetes are especially affected by tobacco smoke. The high levels of nicotine from smoking cigarettes can make the cells in your body less responsive to insulin, which makes your blood sugar levels higher. People with diabetes who are exposed to a high amount of nicotine may need more insulin to regulate their blood sugar levels.

People with diabetes who smoke are also more likely to have serious health problems from diabetes, such as higher risks for serious complications, including:

Heart disease: Smoking increases bad cholesterol and lowers good cholesterol levels. Over time, high cholesterol increases the risk of heart disease.

High Blood Pressure: People who have diabetes and smoke have a much higher risk of blood vessel damage from inflammation. Blood vessels stiffen when they are damaged, and this leads to high blood pressure.

Kidney damage and disease: Compared to people who don't smoke, people who smoke and have diabetes are more likely to develop protein in their urine and subsequent terminal renal failure.

Vision loss or blindness: When you smoke cigarettes, you can damage important parts of your eyes necessary for maintaining clear eyesight and vision.

Poor circulation and amputations: Smoking causes damage and scarring to small blood vessels which can lead to poor circulation to the feet and legs. This increases risk of infections and ulcers which is the leading cause of diabetic amputations.

Nerve Damage: Smoking-related inflammation also causes damage to the nerves that can lead to pain, numbness, and tingling.

How Many People Die Each Year from Diabetes Caused by Smoking?

According to the American Diabetes Association [External Link Disclaimer](#), diabetes was listed as the underlying cause of death for over 87,000 people in 2019, making it the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. An estimated 9,000 people in the U.S. die each year from diabetes caused by cigarette smoking.