

# SMOKING, VAPING AND YOUR EYES

# FACT SHEET

Smoke is a major eye irritant; it's even worse when you wear contact lenses. The tar and nicotine deposits on your fingers contaminate your lenses when you handle them, making your eyes feel irritated.

## Smokers look, smell and feel bad

Tobacco affects skin appearance, the smell of your breath and clothes, your eye brightness and your overall health in negative ways. Because smoking damages the lungs, even new smokers experience a shortness of breath and a nagging cough that doesn't go away. Athletic ability suffers due to the reduced oxygen your lungs can process. You are wearing contacts to enhance your image. Tobacco use will do the total opposite.

## Smoking can cause vision loss

In addition to the diseases already associated with smoking, such as lung cancer, emphysema, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke and overall reduced life expectancy, people who smoke are four times more likely to develop a blinding eye disease called macular degeneration.

Smokers also put friends and family at risk for all smoking-related diseases by exposing them to the poisons contained

in secondhand smoke. Over two million non-smokers have died from second-hand smoke since data recording started in the mid-1960s. Secondhand smoke can also cause immediate negative effects in patients with other lung conditions such as asthma.

## If you don't use tobacco, don't start

If offered a cigarette or tobacco of any kind, simply say, "No thanks." Smoking not only kills thousands of people every day in the United States and throughout the world, it also robs you of your health long before it kills you.

If you currently use tobacco but want to quit, talk to your eye doctor or family doctor about your desire to quit. For a good resource, call 800-QUITNOW (800.784.8669), or your local health department.

## Is smokeless tobacco safer?

No. There is no safe way to use tobacco. Plus, with smokeless tobacco there is a greater risk of developing gum disease, mouth cancer, and staining your teeth.

## What about e-cigarettes?

Electronic cigarettes and

vaping use a battery operated device that heats the nicotine where sometimes flavors are added. There is still much debate on how safe they are. There is no debate that they contain nicotine, which is highly addictive. E-cigs can cause harm to the developing brains of children under 18 and could cause harm to a fetus. Women should not use any type of nicotine if they are pregnant. Some e-cigs contain diacetyl which is a flavor similar to butter and used on microwave popcorn. This chemical can cause "popcorn lung disease." This disease can cause shortness of breath, coughing and is irreversible. It is similar to chronic



obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD. E-cigs have also been linked in studies to be a 'gateway drug' for kids who go on to become regular tobacco users. There is little evidence that e-cigs are helpful in quitting tobacco use.

### **Commit to say "NO"**

Here are some quick facts that will help you and your friends reject tobacco.

### **Did you know?**

- The tobacco industry spends millions of dollars daily in the United States marketing its deadly products to young people to replace older, dying smokers.
- Each day, more than 3,200 people under age 18 smoke their first cigarette, and approximately 2,100 youth and young adults become daily smokers.
- 9 out of 10 smokers start before the age of 18, and 98 percent start smoking by age 26.
- Approximately 18 percent of high school students smoke cigarettes.
- Smoking and secondary smoke aggravate asthma.
- Smoking during pregnancy can cause serious damage to the unborn baby, including death.
- From 1964 to 2014, the proportion of adult smokers declined from 42 percent to 18 percent.

### **What else?**

- More than 16 million Americans already have at least one disease from smoking.
- More than 20 million Americans have died because of smoking since 1964, including approximately 2.5 million deaths due to exposure to secondhand smoke.
- On average, smokers die 13 to 14 years earlier than nonsmokers.

For more information, visit or [www.smokefree.org](http://www.smokefree.org) or [www.tobaccofreekids.org](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org).