UNC PHYSICIANS NETWORK
UNC HEALTH CARE
CAROLINA ADVANCED HEALTH

Smoking and Diabetes

Breaking the smoking habit is even more important if you have diabetes or want to avoid getting it.

Diabetes is a disease of the pancreas, an organ behind your stomach. Normally, the pancreas releases a substance, called insulin, into the blood. Insulin helps the body use simple sugars and fats broken down from the food we eat. When a person has diabetes, the pancreas either does not make insulin, doesn't make enough of it, or the insulin does not work properly. Diabetes is a serious illness and its long-term complications can include eye disease (retinopathy), kidney disease (nephropathy), heart disease, and nerve disease (neuropathy).

Smoking increases your risk of getting diabetes.

If you smoke and think you are otherwise in good health, think again. According to a study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, smoking 16 to 25 cigarettes a day increases your risk for Type 2 diabetes to three times that of a non-smoker. The more risk factors a person has, the greater the chances are of developing diabetes.

Risk factors for Type 2 diabetes include:

- Family history of diabetes
- Being of African-American, Hispanic, or Native American race or ethnic background
- Obesity (This means a person is 20 percent or more over his or her desired body weight.)
- Physical stress (This includes things such as surgery or illness.)
- Injury to the pancreas (Injuries can occur from things such as infection, tumor, surgery, or accident)
- Autoimmune disease
- Hypertension
- Elevated blood cholesterol or triglyceride levels
- Age (Risk increases with age.)
- Alcohol (Risk increases with years of heavy alcohol use.)
- Smoking
- Pregnancy (Women can develop diabetes during pregnancy. If this happens, the chance of developing Type 2 diabetes later in life also increases.)

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Smoking increases complications for those who have diabetes.

While smoking can increase your chances of getting diabetes, it can also make managing diabetes more difficult for those who already have it. Other complications of smoking on diabetes include **retinopathy (eye disease), heart disease, stroke, vascular disease, kidney disease, nerve damage, foot problems, and many others.**

Reducing your risk of getting diabetes

A person with some or all of the risk factors might never develop diabetes, but your chances increase as more risk factors are present. Certain risk factors like age, family history, and ethnicity cannot be altered, but a change in lifestyle that includes eating a modified diet, increasing physical activity, and **quitting smoking** might help reduce your risk. Diabetes Basics: Smoking www.diabetes.org Accessed 3/7/2012 © Copyright 1995-2012 The Cleveland Clinic Foundation. All rights reserved.

Carolina Advanced Health has a program to help you quit. Our care manager and pharmacist work together with each patient to find the treatments that will help each individual quit and stay tobacco free. Ask for an appointment to meet with our care manager to learn more.