

# See how smoking causes blindness (while you still can)

Every time you inhale cigarette smoke, thousands of chemicals enter your bloodstream and are carried to every part of your body.

Delicate organs such as your eyes are among those most at risk.

Research has now confirmed that smoking is the major preventable cause of an irreversible form of blindness called macular degeneration - the most common type of blindness in Australia.

It can occur in one or both eyes and creates a permanent blind spot directly in your line of sight. Everyday tasks such as reading, driving or even recognising faces become difficult if not impossible.

Here's how smoking causes irreversible blindness.

The most sensitive part of the eye is the surface at the back called the retina. The most sensitive part of the retina is the macula. Chemicals from

cigarette smoke can cause tiny blood vessels to burst through the macula; they can also cause the cells within the macula to die. Either of which leads to loss of vision.

If diagnosed early, laser surgery can prevent further deterioration. However in 50% of cases the condition comes back after treatment (and in virtually all cases if the patient continues to smoke).

If you quit, your risk of blindness by macular degeneration is greatly reduced although existing damage can never be undone.

Quitting smoking isn't easy and most smokers make several attempts before they succeed.

For those who need help or tips on how to beat the cravings, it's as close as the nearest phone. Even if you're only thinking about giving up smoking call the Quitline today on 131 848.



MACULAR DEGENERATION

Every cigarette is doing you damage **Quit 131 848**

THE NATIONAL TOBACCO CAMPAIGN  
a federal, state and territory health initiative

[www.quitnow.info.au](http://www.quitnow.info.au)