

# TYPE 2 DIABETES & SMOKING



## How are smoking and type 2 diabetes related?

Research shows that cigarette smoking is a cause of type 2 diabetes. Smokers are 30-40% more likely to develop diabetes than non-smokers.

Your body uses sugar for energy. The hormone insulin acts as the key to allow sugar from the blood into your cells. People with type 2 diabetes have a flaw in the insulin keyhole, called insulin resistance. If diabetes is not well controlled, the blood contains high sugar levels even though the cells are hungry for sugar. High blood sugar levels harm many parts of the body.

Nicotine and other chemicals in tobacco smoke can cause insulin resistance.

## How does smoking affect my type 2 diabetes?

If you smoke, you may need higher doses of insulin to maintain proper blood sugar. Insulin can lower blood sugars, but it can also have very dangerous side-effects. Smoking increases the risk of diabetes-related health issues including:

- High blood pressure, heart disease, or stroke
- Kidney disease
- Erectile problems in men
- Circulatory problems that may lead to leg pain, numbness or weakness in your legs, or sores on your legs or feet that will not heal, which may lead to amputation

## How will type 2 diabetes be affected if I quit smoking?

When you stop smoking:

- Your risk for developing diabetes will eventually drop.
- You can reduce the damage of diabetes-related problems like nerve damage or needing amputations.
- You lower risks for stroke, heart problems, and early death.
- Some people gain weight right after quitting smoking, which can increase risk for diabetes. Talk to your VA provider and consider participating in MOVE!, VA's weight management program to avoid these risks.

## I want to stop smoking — how do I get started?

- Talk to your VA primary care or mental health provider about tobacco cessation medications and counseling that can help you quit.
- Call VA's tobacco quitline: **1-855-QUIT-VET** (1-855-784-8838) Monday–Friday, available in English & Spanish
- Sign up for VA's SmokefreeVET text messaging program—text the word **VET** to **47848** (or **VETesp** to **47848** for Spanish) or visit [smokefree.gov/VET](https://smokefree.gov/VET)
- Visit [mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco](https://mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco)



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