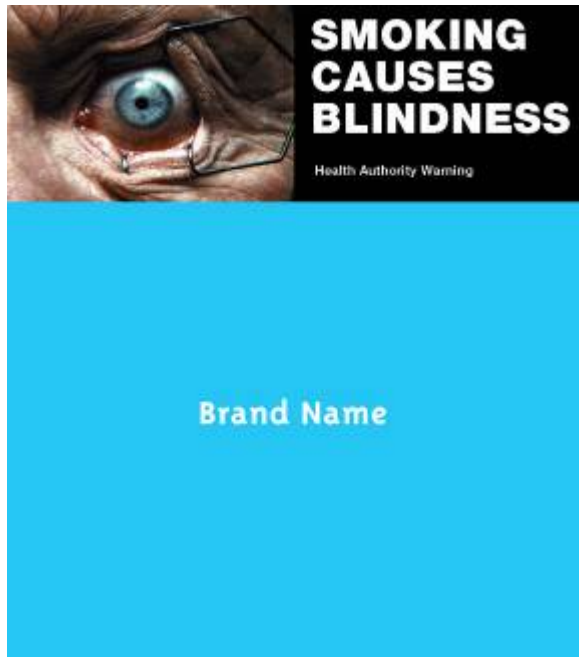


SMOKING CAUSES BLINDNESS



**Front of Cigarette Pack
(representation only)**



**Back of Cigarette Pack
(representation only)**

Many smokers are unaware of the link between tobacco smoking and blindness. The most common form of blindness caused by smoking is age-related macular degeneration.¹

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a disease affecting the macular, which is the central part of the retina at the back of the eye that provides vision for daily tasks such as driving, reading and recognising faces. The disease causes irreversible loss of central vision.² It is usually related to ageing and most commonly affects people over 50 years of age.

Age-related macular degeneration is a progressive disease and there is currently no cure for the disease.^{3,4} The most important known preventable risk factor for developing age-related macular degeneration is tobacco consumption.^{2,5}

Current smokers have four times the risk of developing age-related macular degeneration compared to past smokers or non-smokers.^{5,6} Smokers may also develop the disease about 10 years earlier than non-smokers.^{1,7}

The number of years you smoke and the number of cigarettes smoked increases the risk of developing age-related macular degeneration.^{1,8,9}

There are around 150,600 Australians who may have age-related macular degeneration.¹⁰ It is estimated that smoking causes or contributes to around 20% of new blindness in people over 50 years old.⁶

In many cases, age-related macular degeneration may be prevented by eliminating smoking.² If you quit smoking, your risk of developing age-related macular degeneration decreases the longer you stay off cigarettes. 20 years after quitting, your risk is the same as someone who has never smoked.^{1,9,11}

There is also some evidence of increased risk for age-related macular degeneration in non-smokers exposed to passive smoking.⁸

Smoking also increases your risk of developing other eye problems such as cataracts. A cataract is the clouding of the eye's naturally clear lens.² As a result, the amount of light that can pass through is reduced and the image cannot be properly focussed on the retina in the eye.^{2,12} Cataracts are another leading cause of blindness and smokers are two to three times more likely to develop cataracts than nonsmokers.¹³

The number of years you smoke and the number of cigarettes smoked increases the risk of developing a cataract.^{12,14,15}

Decided to quit? For help, talk to your doctor or pharmacist, call the Quitline on 131 848 or visit the Quitline web site at www.quitnow.info.au.

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