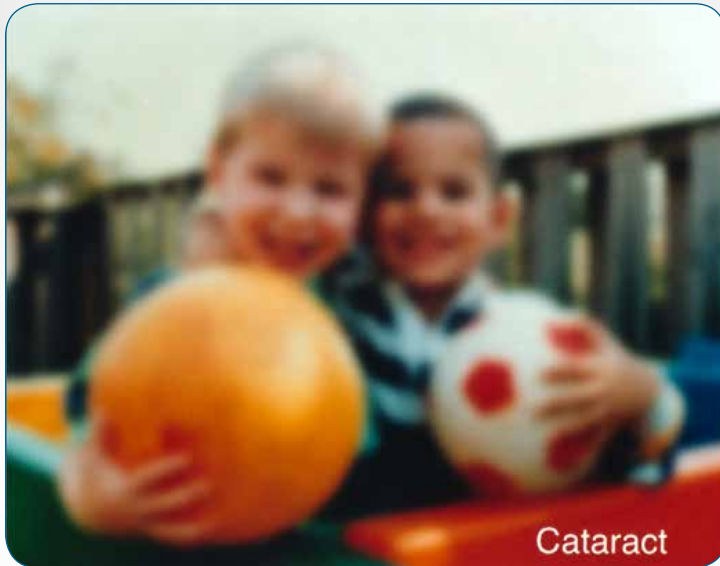


# Smoking and sight loss

Photo: National Eye Institute, National Institutes of Health.



Smoking harms almost every organ in your body, including your eyes. Research has shown that if you are a smoker, you are at increased risk of sight loss and are more likely than non-smokers to suffer from specific eye diseases, such as:

- **cataract** – clouding of the lens of the eye causes poor vision, and smokers are twice as likely to develop cataracts.
- **macular degeneration** – damage to the central part of the retina causes central vision loss; face and object recognition is impaired. Smokers are 4 times as likely to suffer from macular degeneration.
- **dry eyes** – chemicals and toxins in cigarette smoke irritate the surface of the eye.
- **inflammation of the eyes** – smokers are more likely to develop inflammation inside the eye, known as uveitis, and this can cause severe sight impairment.



Smoking also increases the likelihood of complications and eye problems in:

- **diabetes** – if you are a person with diabetes and a smoker, you are more at risk of diabetic retinopathy, a condition where the blood vessels within the eye are damaged and which can cause sight loss.
- **pregnancy** – smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of your baby being born prematurely. Premature babies can suffer retinopathy of prematurity, which can cause vision loss or blindness.



**Stopping smoking at any age can reduce your risk of eye conditions that cause visual impairment and blindness. It's never too late to stop smoking, and there are over 600 free stop smoking services in Northern Ireland that can help. Look for the stop smoking services logo or for more information and to find your nearest service, visit [www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info)**

