Diabetes and smoking: understanding the risks and benefits of quitting

Patient information leaflet

Smoking remains one of the biggest causes of death and ill health in the UK. The Quit Your Way Hebrides smoking cessation service provides free, confidential advice, help and support to anyone who would like to quit smoking or stop vaping.

How smoking affects diabetes

Nicotine from cigarettes can make your body's cells less responsive to insulin, leading to higher blood glucose levels. This means people with diabetes who are exposed to a high amount of nicotine may need more insulin to regulate their blood sugar levels.

People who smoke are more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes than people who do not smoke.

Smoking + diabetes = higher risk of:
- **Heart disease**
- **Vision loss**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Poor circulation**
- **Slow healing**
- **Kidney disease**

The benefits of stopping smoking

Quitting smoking has many benefits, including:
- Better blood glucose control
- Improved circulation
- Reduced risk of heart disease
- Reduced risk of kidney disease
- More energy
- Better quality of life

Quitting smoking: impact on diabetes

Quitting smoking improves blood sugar control almost immediately and reduces the risk of complications over time. Within:
- **8 hours** - oxygen levels improve, and carbon monoxide clears from the blood
- **48 hours** - nerve endings start to regenerate
- **2-12 weeks** - blood circulation improves
- **Months to years** - risk of heart disease and other complications drops significantly

Be prepared for changes in blood glucose levels

After quitting, blood glucose levels may change as your body's sensitivity to insulin improves. Some people may need adjustments to their diabetes medication.

Monitor blood glucose levels more frequently in the first few weeks to avoid hypoglycemia.

If you are having any difficulties, please work with your GP, diabetic specialist nurse or diabetic team.

Quit Your Way Hebrides is here to help you when you are ready.

You are not on your own.

Managing cravings and stress without spiking blood sugar

Many people worry about weight gain as nicotine suppresses appetite. It is best to avoid sugary, fatty snacks. Here are some helpful tips you may wish to explore:
- Choose healthy snacks such as vegetables, nuts and low-sugar yoghurts.

- Drink plenty of water to help your body recover and stay hydrated.
- Physical activity – try taking a short walk. This can help reduce cravings and support blood glucose control.
- Have you tried deep breathing and meditation? This helps with stress management.
- Build a support network around you. Tell your friends and family that you want to stop smoking and would appreciate their support. This can be done easily by asking them not to smoke in your house, not to offer you a cigarette, and to just be there for you.

"The benefits of stopping smoking far outweigh the temporary challenges. Quitting isn't just about adding years to your life – it's about adding life to your years".

Quit Your Way Hebrides

The Quit Your Way Hebrides service offers free appointments at a time that suits you, along with access to Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) products.

NRT is a safe and effective treatment that can help manage cravings and withdrawal symptoms while you stop smoking.

There is also non-nicotine medication available on prescription.

Once you have been referred to the Quit Your Way Hebrides service, a Smoking Cessation Coordinator will meet with you, discuss options, and take care of your stop smoking prescriptions for you.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Contact Quit Your Way Hebrides
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Email:
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Do e-cigarettes affect blood glucose levels?

To date, there is limited robust clinical research on the effects of e-cigarettes on blood glucose levels in people with diabetes.

Research showed that higher nicotine levels are associated with slightly increased HbA1c levels in people without diabetes.

Whilst the increase in HbA1c was not great (less than 1 mmol/mol), long term use of either cigarettes or e-cigarettes in diabetes could contribute to a higher HbA1c.

(Information taken from mydiabetesmyway.scot.nhs.uk)

We are listening - how did we do?

We welcome your feedback, as it helps us to evaluate the services we provide. If you would like to tell us about your experience:

- speak to a member of staff
- visit out website: www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk/feedback or share your story at: www.careopinion.org.uk or tel. 0800 122 3135
- tel. 01851 481814 and leave a message, or email wi.feedback@nhs.scot

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