

Not your Cigarette, You are Smoking your Eyes

Next time you are smoking that cigarette, think twice. This is for those obsessive smokers, for whom the statutory warning does little to hike the apprehensions. A cigarette in your hand may make you look smart and upbeat and carefree, but can inflict you to burn out your lungs, burn other people's lungs and may even make you lose eye sight. Out of the 4000 chemicals that run down your bloodstream due to smoking, there are those which have the potential to vex you into the world of darkness.

Cigarette smoke enhances oxidants, which are the chemical byproducts in the body that can damage cells, including those in the eyes. There are strong links between several diseases of the eye and smoking, including cataracts and age-related macular degeneration.

Smokers are more prone to losing their eyesight later in life than non-smokers, says a recent study. Out of a sample group of 500,000 people with age-related macular degeneration (AMD), 54,000 people have the condition as a result of smoking. With your age, just like a plant, smoking waters the disease to reach its fullest stage. AMD usually develops after a person reaches 50 years and affects the central part of the retina of the eye. Cellular debris begins to build up, producing yellow or white particles known as drusen. In some cases, a perceived lack of oxygen in the retina signals chemical mediators to begin new blood vessel growth, or "neovascularization." The new blood vessels are weak and may leak fluid and blood into the retinal tissue. This may cause Missing Letters, Colour Blindness, Total vision loss etc.

Smoking is indispensably related to rise in interocular pressure that may result in glaucoma and damage to optic nerve. Adding to the line of eye ailments, smoking is also responsible for nuclear cataract and thyroid eye disease.

Whilst there are millions of smokers who will be smoking that small white roll, there would be only a handful who would know that smoking causes blindness. In a recent study conducted at Scotland and Singapore indicated that awareness levels for diseases such as lung cancer, heart diseases, mouth and throat cancer and stroke were high, with more than 85 per cent of people in the sample population.

Yet there are no signs on the cigarette packs saying 'Smoking causes blindness'. Australia is the only country which carries a graphic warning label which reads 'Smoking causes blindness'.

"The message is simple ? do not take up smoking, and if you do, stop." So quit smoking before its too late.