

Study: Smoking hikes blinding disease risk

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U.S. scientists say they've determined smoking hikes the risk of age-related macular degeneration, while use of omega-3 fatty acids decreases that risk.

The researchers at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary and Harvard Medical School studied elderly male twins and found those who smoked or had a history of smoking had an increased risk of developing the blinding disease as compared with those who never smoked. At the same time, those who ate more fish and had diets with higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids reduced their risk of the disease.

"Current smokers had a 1.9-fold increased risk of developing AMD, while past smokers had about a 1.7-fold increased risk," said Dr. Johanna Seddon, an associate professor of ophthalmology. "We also found that increased intake of fish reduced the risk of AMD, particularly if they ate two more servings per week."

AMD is the leading cause of irreversible visual impairment and blindness among people aged 60 and older.

The study is detailed in the July issue of *Archives of Ophthalmology*.

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