

HOW SMOKING CAN AFFECT YOUR SKIN

Skin Cancer

Smoking is a leading cause of cancer, including lung, throat, mouth, and esophageal. It can also increase your risk of skin cancer. A study conducted in 2001 showed that smokers are **three times** as likely to develop squamous cell carcinoma (the second most common type of skin cancer) than nonsmokers.

Premature Aging and Wrinkles

Smoking accelerates skin aging by hampering the blood supply that keeps skin tissue looking supple and healthy. This causes smokers to look an average of 1.4 years older than nonsmokers. A study published in 1985 coined the term "Smoker's Face" to describe facial characteristics such as wrinkles, gauntness, and a gray appearance of the skin caused by smoking. The carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke can displace oxygen in your skin, and nicotine causes reduced blood flow. Together, they can leave skin dry and discolored. Smoking can also deplete nutrients, such as vitamin C, which help protect and repair skin damage.

Under Eye Bags

Lack of sleep can show on your face as undereye bags. According to a study by Johns Hopkins, smokers are four times more likely to report feeling unrested after a night's sleep. It has been suggested that nightly nicotine withdrawal can cause restlessness.

Thinner Hair

The toxic chemicals in smoke can damage the DNA in hair follicles and generate cell-damaging free radicals. Smokers have thinner hair that tends to go gray sooner than nonsmokers. Men who smoke are about twice as likely to lose their hair as nonsmokers, even after considering factors that increase the risk of hair loss, such as aging and genetics.

Wound Healing and Scarring

Multiple studies have found that smokers do not heal as well after surgeries. Nicotine causes vasoconstriction, the narrowing of blood vessels that can limit oxygen-rich blood flow to vessels in the face and body. This can slow wound healing and result in scars that are larger and more red.