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Specsavers®

Transforming eye health

PRESS RELEASE

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Clouded vision: The effects of smoking on your eyes

SMOKERS in Britain are being urged to stub out their cigarettes and put down their vapes in a bid to avoid potential sight loss and eye irritation.

In support of No Smoking Day (March 13 2019), Specsavers is warning of the risks smoking can pose such as dry eyes and age-related macular degeneration (AMD) which can result in blindness.

Specsavers clinical spokesperson, Dr Nigel Best says: 'While traditional tobacco smokers remain the most at risk of developing AMD, research also indicates that vapour from e-cigarettes can cause irritation and lead to dry eye syndrome.'

'AMD affects around 600,000 people¹ in the UK alone and smokers are more likely to suffer from this eye condition than non-smokers. The condition is most common in people over the age of 50 and smoking increases the risk of contracting it.'

Dr Best adds: 'Dry Eye Syndrome can also be extremely uncomfortable as the surface of the eye becomes inflamed. This inflammation further damages the cells which are responsible for tear

What is AMD?

There are two types of age-related macular degeneration, dry and wet. Dry AMD is caused by the gradual break down of light-sensitive cells in the macula over several years.

Wet AMD is caused by the growth of blood vessels underneath the macula, which can leak or cause scarring. There is usually a sudden and dramatic decline in vision for those with wet AMD.

There is currently no treatment available for dry AMD, but if detected early the wet type can usually be treated with injections into the eye.

It is very important that anyone who has unusual symptoms, such as straight lines appearing to be wavy or blurring of the central vision, contacts an optometrist as soon as possible.

¹ <https://www.macularsociety.org/age-related-macular-degeneration>

production, resulting in a vicious circle of increasing inflammation and dryness.

‘Another condition to be aware of is glaucoma. While there is no evidence that smoking itself is a risk factor for glaucomatous damage, older smokers do have a higher risk of developing increased eye pressure compared to non-smokers.

‘That is why this No Smoking Day we hope people really take note of the risks and stub out their smoking habit.’

Go to www.nhs.uk/smokefree for more support materials. For further information or to book an eye test visit: <https://www.specsavers.co.uk/>

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Notes to Editors

- Specsavers is a partnership of almost 2,000 locally-run businesses throughout the world -all committed to delivering high quality, affordable optical and hearing care in the communities they serve.
- Each store is part-owned and managed by its own joint venture partners who are supported by key specialists in support offices
- More than 36 million customers are registered with Specsavers and the partnership had a turnover of more than £2.6bn in 2017/18
- More than one in three people who wear glasses in the UK buy them from Specsavers
- Specsavers is a champion of the National Health Service – of its 22.2m customers in the UK, 55% are from the NHS and the company is the largest provider of free NHS digital hearing aids
- Specsavers supports several UK charities and is in partnership with RNIB for a public awareness campaign to transform the nation’s eye health.
- Specsavers runs a home-visiting service in the UK and Ireland for those who cannot get to their local store unaccompanied.