



# Diabetes Fact Sheet for American Indian Commercial Tobacco Users

## Protective Factors:

### Sacred Tobacco

- Only use tobacco for spiritual or ceremonial reasons.
- Work with a Quit Coach and use quit medications to have the best chance of quitting commercial tobacco use.

### Traditional Foods

- Decrease high starch, sugar and carbohydrate foods.
- Eat lean meat like wild game and buffalo.
- Increase use of leafy vegetables like dandelion greens and spinach.

### Daily Activity

- Try to be physically active everyday: Pow Wow dancing, walking, harvesting, and Native Games are all good choices.

### Tribal Health

- Ask a medical provider or traditional healer for help with controlling blood sugars and quitting commercial tobacco use.

## SMOKERS HAVE A 30% TO 40% HIGHER RISK OF DEVELOPING TYPE 2 DIABETES THAN NONSMOKERS.<sup>1</sup>

Almost 1 in 6 Montana American Indians have diabetes.<sup>3</sup>

**Diabetes** If you have diabetes, your body either doesn't make enough insulin or can't use the insulin it makes as well as it should. (Insulin acts like a key to let the blood sugar into your body's cells for use as energy.) When there isn't enough insulin or cells stop responding to insulin, too much blood sugar stays in your bloodstream.<sup>2</sup>

40% of Montana American Indian Adults smoke cigarettes.<sup>3</sup>

**How Smoking Can Lead to Type 2 Diabetes:** Insulin helps blood sugar enter cells, but nicotine changes cells so they don't respond to insulin, which increases blood sugar levels. Chemicals in cigarettes harm cells in your body and cause inflammation. This also makes cells stop responding to insulin. People who smoke have a higher risk of belly fat, which increases the risk for type 2 diabetes even if they aren't overweight.<sup>4</sup>

People with diabetes who smoke are more likely to have a higher risk for serious health complications, including kidney failure, blindness, amputations, and stroke.<sup>4</sup>

**People with diabetes who smoke** are more likely to have trouble with insulin dosing and controlling their disease. Over time, high blood sugar from diabetes can damage blood vessels as well as nerves in and around your heart increasing the risk of heart disease.<sup>4</sup>

## Commercial Tobacco and Diabetes DON'T Mix –



**Preserve traditions.**  
Quit commercial tobacco.

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## CONTACT

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## SOURCES

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2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [What is diabetes? | CDC](#); page last reviewed: June 11, 2020
3. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2020.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Smoking and Diabetes | Diabetes | CDC](#); page last reviewed: August 10, 2021

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