

# Smoking and Surgery

*The earlier you quit, the greater your chances of recovery.*

## **Surgery—a great opportunity to quit**

Stopping smoking before surgery lowers your risk of serious problems and may mean:

- faster recovery
- less need for antibiotics
- less time in hospital

Cutting down in the weeks before surgery does not reduce the risks of wound or lung complications.

***For the greatest benefit, you should aim to quit smoking at least eight weeks prior to surgery.***

## **What are the risks of smoking before surgery?**

**If you continue to smoke right up until the time you have surgery, you will be more likely to:**

- starve your heart and body of oxygen (due to high levels of carbon monoxide in your body caused by smoking)
- form blood clots in your veins, clots can lead to stroke or heart attack
- have difficulty breathing during and after surgery as a result of lung impairment due to smoking
- increase your risk of wound infection
- have a higher risk of lung complications, such as pneumonia and lung collapse
- slow the healing of bones, skin and wounds
- change the breakdown of certain drugs in your blood.

Remember, the longer you stop smoking, the better. However, if you have not quit, stopping smoking for at least 12 hours before surgery may help.

## Benefits of quitting

### When you quit:

- At **eight hours** your heart rate and blood pressure will begin to return to normal.
- At **twelve hours** levels of carbon monoxide in your blood drop, allowing your blood to supply more oxygen to your body.
- At **one week** your lungs will have begun to recover and will start cleaning mucus out of your lungs.
- At **two weeks** your throat and the large airways in your lungs will be less reactive, causing fewer problems with breathing during surgery.
- At **three weeks** your body's ability to heal wounds will have begun to improve.
- At **four weeks** the small airways in your lungs will be working better and will continue to improve.
- At **six weeks** your lungs will produce a normal amount of mucus, which will help your breathing during surgery.
- At **eight weeks** your blood flow will improve, and your risk of wound complications will be much less than a continuing smoker.

Your rate or extent of recovery may also depend on other things, such as whether you already have an advanced smoking-related illness.

## Staying quit after surgery

**After surgery, it is important you do not start smoking again**, even if you only quit 12 hours before surgery. Allow your body time to recover and heal properly. Smoking makes recovery harder by stressing your heart, reducing oxygen in your blood and body tissues, and damaging your lungs.

Staying smoke-free means you:

- help yourself recover
- reduce your risk of stroke and heart attack
- save money, then if you continued to smoke
- have a lower risk of lung disease than if you keep smoking

## Where can I get support to quit?

- **Quitline (13 7848)**

Quitline is available 7 days a week offering support, encouragement and resources to people who want to quit smoking.

**If you're interested in quitting or would just like some information, call Quitline 13 7848.**



- **Talk to your health professional**

Discuss quitting smoking with your general practitioner (GP), pharmacist or community health worker and plan your quit strategy together.

- **Consider using pharmacotherapy**

Different products are available to help you quit smoking.

**Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)** includes patches, gum, lozenges, inhalers and mouth spray. The aim of NRT products is to replace some of the nicotine from cigarettes without the harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke, which reduces withdrawal symptoms, such as cravings and anxiety.

**Varenicline and Bupropion Hcl** and are non-nicotine medications that are also effective in helping smokers to quit. These medications are available only on prescription. Your GP can help decide if they are suitable for you.

- **Other Resources**

- Visit **Quit HQ** for more information on quitting smoking at [www.qld.gov.au/quithq](http://www.qld.gov.au/quithq)
- Download the '**MyQuitBuddy**' app on your smartphone. For further information visit [www.quitnow.gov.au](http://www.quitnow.gov.au)
- Download the '**Quit for You – Quit for Two**' app on your smartphone. For further information visit [www.quitnow.gov.au](http://www.quitnow.gov.au)