



Ascension

Learning About Stopping Smoking Before Surgery

Patient Education Instructions

How does smoking affect surgery risks?

After a surgery, your body puts all of its energy into healing. Smoking makes this harder. It cuts the amount of oxygen available to your body to heal. And smoking makes infection and complications more of a risk.

How does being smoke-free help you recover from surgery?

When you quit smoking before surgery, you lower your risk of these things after surgery:

- Heart problems
- Breathing problems and pneumonia
- Wound infection
- Healing problems

With every week or month that you've been smoke-free before surgery, you improve your chances of having a healthy recovery. It is best to be quit smoking at least a week before surgery so that your airways are clearer.

Quitting also improves your health. Your risk of things like heart attack and stroke start to go down as soon as you quit. And the longer you're smoke-free, the lower your risk of things like cancer and lung disease. When you're smoke-free, you get sick less often. You are less likely to get colds, flu, bronchitis, and pneumonia.

How can you be smoke-free before and after surgery?

Your doctor will help you set up the plan that best meets your needs. There are medicines that may help. You may want to attend a smoking cessation program to help you quit smoking. When you choose a program, look for one that has proven success. Ask your doctor for ideas.

Ask your doctor if you can try medicine or nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). You will greatly increase your chances of success if you take medicine or nicotine replacement products along with getting counseling or joining a cessation program

Here are some other things you can do:

Ask your family, friends, and coworkers for support. You have a better chance of quitting if you have help and support.

- Join a support group, such as Nicotine Anonymous, for people who are trying to quit smoking. Or use an online program, such as www.smokefree.gov or the American Lung Association's Freedom from Smoking program (www.lung.org).
- Set a quit date and stick to it. Pick your date carefully so that it is not right in the middle of a big deadline or stressful time. After you quit, don't even take a puff. Get rid of all ashtrays and lighters after your last cigarette. Clean your house, car, and clothes so that they don't smell like smoke.
- Learn how to be a nonsmoker. Think about ways you can avoid those things that make you reach for a cigarette.
- Avoid situations that put you at greatest risk for smoking. For some people, it's hard to have a drink with friends without smoking. Other people might skip a coffee break with coworkers who smoke.
- Change your daily routine. Take a different route to work, or eat a meal in a different place.
- Recognize when you are stressed. Calm yourself or release tension by doing an activity you enjoy, such as reading a book, taking a hot bath, or gardening.
- Some people find hypnosis, acupuncture, and massage helpful for quitting.
- Eat a healthy diet and get regular exercise. Having healthy habits will help your body move past its craving for nicotine.
- Be prepared to keep trying. Most people don't succeed the first few times they try to quit. Don't get mad at yourself if you smoke again. Make a list of things you learned. Then think about when you want to try again, such as next week or next month.

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