



Help and advice on quitting smoking before your surgery



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nccp
National Cancer
Control Programme

Now that you are waiting to have surgery this is a good time to consider quitting smoking.

Recovering from surgery can be harder on your body when you smoke.

We know how hard it is to give up smoking but there is **FREE** help and advice to support you.



There are many benefits to quitting before your surgery:



Improves breathing and reduces strain on lungs



Reduces risk of infection



Less likely to have problems from surgery



Improves wound healing after surgery



Less time in hospital

How does smoking increase my risk of chest problems after surgery?

If you smoke, surgery can be harder on your body. You may need more anaesthetic during the operation.

After surgery, you are much more likely to have breathing problems or a chest infection.

Smoking harms your lungs. Tar and chemicals in cigarettes irritate your lungs. This makes it harder for your lungs to clear mucus. Mucus can build up and cause infection.

Because of this your recovery may take longer. You may need to stay in hospital longer. Smoking can affect your long-term health after surgery.

Smoking also reduces oxygen in your blood. Carbon monoxide from cigarettes takes oxygen away. You may need to spend more time in recovery. You may need extra oxygen.

If you stop smoking before surgery:

- Your oxygen levels can improve within a few days.
- Your body will heal faster.
- Your risk of chest problems will be much lower.

Even stopping for a short time before surgery can help.

How does smoking cause poor wound healing?

Smoking makes it harder for your body to heal. Smoking reduces oxygen in your blood. Oxygen is needed to help wounds heal.

When oxygen and nutrients do not reach your wound, healing is slower and healing is also poorer.

Smoking affects your blood and blood vessels. Nicotine makes blood cells stick together. Nicotine also makes blood vessels tighten.

This can lead to:

- High blood pressure
- Blood clots
- Less healthy blood reaching your wound

Wounds heal best when blood pressure is normal and blood with plenty of oxygen reaches the wound.

Why are bone injuries slower to heal in smokers?

A broken bone recovers when new bone is made. In non-smokers, bones will grow one centimetre every two months. In smokers, it can take three months for this to happen. Quitting smoking can improve the body's ability to heal properly and reduce these risks.

How soon should I quit smoking before surgery?

The earlier you quit before your surgery the better. As carbon monoxide starts to leave your body within 24 hours, even quitting a few days before surgery can reduce your risk.

If you stop smoking 4-8 weeks before your surgery, and do not have permanent lung damage from smoking, you will reduce your risk of breathing problems after surgery to the same level as a person who has never smoked.



'It is never too late to stop; quitting at any stage will benefit your health'

Do you need more advice and support?

If you want to stop smoking, getting the right help can double your chances of success. You can get help to quit through:

- one-to-one sessions at a stop smoking clinic in your area or on the phone
- group support sessions
- our online QUIT plan
- our QUIT text service information on our quit.ie page or app
- support from family and friends.



Whether you choose one-to-one support or attend a group, the stop smoking advisors will:

- ask about your smoking history and habit
- assess your nicotine addiction
- measure your carbon monoxide levels
- recommend and provide free medicines that might work for you

Support with quitting smoking

Getting support from a Stop Smoking Advisor doubles your chances of quitting. You can contact us:

- **Freephone: 1800 201203**
- **Freetext: QUIT to 50100**
- **Web: www.quit.ie**
- **Sign up for a free Quit plan on the HSE app**



Scan the QR code to access stop smoking clinics

The HSE stop smoking services are free of charge to all clients. Stop smoking advisors can discuss the service with you as well as helping you to access free NRT (such as patches and gum) or stop smoking medicines.

Our advisors know how hard it is to quit. They will support you every step of the way without judgement.