



**Stopping smoking
for surgery**

quit.org.au



**Stopping smoking
lowers your risk of
serious problems during
and after surgery.**

**Doctors strongly recommend
stopping smoking before
surgery.**

Before surgery – a good time to quit

To get the best outcome from your surgery, stopping smoking is an important step to take.

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

- › faster recovery
- › less time in hospital, and
- › less need for antibiotics.

The chemicals in cigarettes affect how your body works and how well it copes during and after surgery.

The good news is, your body begins to repair itself as soon as you stop smoking. Your risk of complications from surgery is much lower, and you may have better surgery outcomes.

Cutting down the number of cigarettes you smoke without stopping completely in the weeks before your surgery does not reduce your risk of complications.

You can cut down before stopping smoking completely, but your body will only start to recover from the time you stop completely.

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



Every week you don't smoke before surgery will help your body cope better during surgery and help your recovery afterwards.

What are the risks from smoking?

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

- › reduce the oxygen supply to your heart and body
- › have difficulty breathing during and after surgery
- › increase your risk of wound infection
- › increase your risk of lung complications
- › slow down or harm the healing of bones, skin and wounds
- › reduce how well some pain-relieving and other drugs work.

Talk to your doctor and surgeon

Let your doctor (general practitioner) and surgeon know about your smoking.

Also tell them if you are using e-cigarettes (vaping) because it may increase the risk for wound complications.

Make sure the hospital or your surgeon knows all the medications you are taking when you are admitted to hospital.

Smoking and anaesthesia

When you have surgery, you usually have an anaesthetic drug so the operation can be performed without pain.

Smoking adds to the stress of surgery under anaesthesia by reducing the oxygen supply to your heart and body and increasing the risk of breathing difficulties and infection.

If you smoke, you are more likely to be admitted to intensive care and to need life support.

If you have heart disease, where your supply of blood and oxygen is already reduced, then it is very important to stop smoking at least 24 hours before surgery.

Even stopping smoking 24 hours before surgery will help your body get the oxygen it needs.

When you stop smoking

After 12 hours

- › Your blood pressure is more stable and your heart rate is slower. Your heart is less stressed so it needs less oxygen to work properly.

By 24 hours

- › The level of carbon monoxide (CO) in your blood has dropped. Carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke replaces some of the oxygen in your blood. As CO drops, your blood can supply **oxygen** to your heart, muscles and skin more easily.

By 3 to 4 weeks

- › Your body is better at fighting wound infections, helping surgical cuts to heal.

By 4 to 6 weeks

- › You will be less likely to cough. This helps your breathing under anaesthesia and reduces sharp pains from coughing for people with chest or abdominal (gut) surgery.

By 8 weeks

- › Your risk of lung and breathing complications will be lower than someone who keeps smoking. These risks include pneumonia and other problems which make it harder to breathe. Your immune system and your response to anaesthetic drugs will also improve.

How well you recover may also depend on other things such as existing medical conditions.

After surgery – staying quit

After surgery, it is important that you try to stay quit, even if you only quit the day before surgery. Allow your body to recover and heal properly.

Any gains you made by quitting before surgery will be lost if you start smoking again.

Smoking can slow down and interfere with the healing of bones, skin and other body tissues. Smoking narrows the tiny blood vessels in your skin, restricting blood flow and oxygen to wounds trying to heal. Infection is more likely.

In some types of surgery, skin at the site of the cut is more likely to die if you smoke.

Smoking makes recovery harder by stressing your heart and lungs.



Staying quit means you:

- › help your recovery
- › can have a better response to medical treatments and less side effects
- › cut your risk of heart attack and stroke
- › help protect your eyesight, bone health, teeth and gums
- › have a lower risk of lung disease and cancer than if you keep smoking
- › save a lot of money.

Know your triggers

A common reason to smoke is nicotine addiction: your body wants nicotine and starts having cravings and withdrawal. Smoking is also often tied to habits, feelings and being with friends.

When do you smoke?



Having coffee



Watching TV



With friends



With alcohol



After food



Other times?



When you're
angry, stressed
or bored



Other
emotions?

Once you know your triggers to smoke, you can work out ways to help manage them.

Planning to quit

You won't be able to smoke while you are in hospital, so take this chance to stop for good.

The best way to stop smoking is to:

Use stop smoking medications to reduce cravings and feelings of withdrawal.

Talk to your doctor about what's best for you.

Use a **nicotine patch together with nicotine lozenges**, inhalator, spray or gum or, use a **prescribed stop smoking tablet**.

Some of these medications are cheaper with a script from your doctor.

PLUS

Tailored support to help you manage your triggers to smoke.

Contact  **Quitline 137848** or visit

quit.org.au

*This information is for general use only:
please consult your health professional for further advice.*



Call the Quitline 13 7848

You are more likely to stop smoking and stay quit when you talk with your Quitline counsellor.

What is Quitline?

Quitline is a friendly, free telephone service. We care and we don't judge. You don't have to feel ready to quit to call. We'll work with you no matter where you're at with your smoking.

Your call is confidential. This means you don't have to give your name if you don't want to.

Quitline counsellors are qualified experts and understand that stopping smoking is challenging.

Your Quitline counsellor will listen carefully and provide practical, tailored advice just for you.

Quitline counsellors can also support you if you're using e-cigarettes to stop smoking and can help you stop vaping.

How do I call Quitline?

Call **13 7848** for the cost of a local call on your phone.

Or you can arrange for Quitline to call you for free.

Text 'call back' to 0482 090 634 and we'll call you back.

Or simply enter your name and phone number at **quit.org.au/callback**.

Or your health worker or doctor can fill out a referral at **quit.org.au/referral** and send it off by fax or online.

What happens on the phone?

A typical first call to Quitline takes around 20 minutes. It covers:

- › how long you've been smoking
- › why you want to stop
- › understanding why you smoke
- › managing stress
- › information on ways to stop smoking and how to use stop smoking medications.

Your Quitline counsellor will work with you to figure out how they can support you on future calls.

If you would like, Quitline can call you back. We can call you regularly during your quitting journey. This is the best way to help you to stay quit.

Quitline is a safe space for people in LGBTIQ+ communities.

Aboriginal Quitline counsellors are available. Visit aql.org.au for more.

Quitline uses interpreter services for people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Quitline 13 7848

Quitline is a welcoming, confidential telephone support service that works with you to help you stop smoking. Your friendly Quitline counsellor is qualified to give support suited to your needs.

There are many ways to contact Quitline:

- › Call **13 7848**
- › Text 'callback' to **0482 090 634**
- › Chat online via **webchat** at **quit.org.au**
- › Message us on **WhatsApp 61 385 832 920** or **Facebook Messenger @quitvic**
- › Or ask Quitline to **call you back** for **free** at **quit.org.au/callback**

Visit quit.org.au

Create your own quit plan with easy-to-find information suited to you.

Find out more about our services that send you regular messages including tips and encouragement while you quit via:

- › Email **Quit Mail** quit.org.au/quitmail
- › SMS **QuitTxt** quit.org.au/quittxt

