



Stop Smoking for Surgery

If you smoke, you probably know it can cause major health problems, from heart disease to asthma to lung cancer. Add surgery complications to the list of concerns. Smoking can increase the risk of anesthesia-related problems from surgery, such as wound infections, pneumonia and heart attacks. If you're having surgery, physician anesthesiologists recommend you quit smoking as soon as possible before the procedure — preferably a week or more before — and for as long as possible afterward. But quitting even the day before surgery helps.

Why is it Important to Stop Smoking Before Surgery?

If you smoke, your heart and lungs don't work as well as they should and you may have breathing and lung problems during or after surgery. You are much more likely to need a ventilator, a machine that breathes for you, after surgery. Also, your surgical incision is more likely to get infected because smoking reduces blood flow, which slows healing.

You reduce the chance of these smoking-related problems by quitting. One study shows that while more than 50 percent of smokers experience surgery complications, that number drops to less than 20 percent among those who quit smoking. It may sound hard to believe, but your body starts healing as soon as you quit; within 12 hours your heart and lungs start working better. The levels of nicotine and carbon monoxide – unhealthy chemicals you inhale in cigarette smoke – begin dropping immediately, improving your blood flow and reducing the chance of problems. This helps you get through surgery safely and heal quickly.

Physician anesthesiologists are medical specialists who manage pain control and closely monitor anesthesia and vital body functions during surgery, including how your heart and lungs are working. During surgery, they see first-hand the heavy toll smoking can take on the body. That's why they strongly encourage anyone who smokes to quit not just for surgery, but for good. Surgery is a great time to quit because you're probably already thinking about your health and how you can improve it. It's also an easier time to quit because you will be thinking about the surgery and may be less likely to suffer from nicotine cravings. Further, for the time you are in the hospital or clinic before and after surgery – whether for a day or for several days – you will not be able to smoke, giving you a great start on kicking the habit.

Meeting With Your Physician Anesthesiologist

Before you have surgery, you will meet with your physician anesthesiologist, a medical doctor who specializes in anesthesia, pain and critical care medicine and works with your physician to develop and administer your anesthesia care plan. With 12 to 14 years of education and 12,000 to 16,000 hours of clinical training, these highly trained medical specialists help ensure safe, high-quality care before, during and after surgery.

In your pre-surgery visit, your physician anesthesiologist will answer your questions about the

Benefits of quitting smoking

- Adds at least six to eight years to your life
- Reduces your risk of lung cancer and heart disease
- Saves you an average of \$1,400 a year
- Reduces your loved ones' exposure to second-hand smoke
- Lowers the risk of anesthesia-related problems during and after surgery
- Helps you heal from surgery faster

surgery and anesthesia and ask you detailed questions about your health and the medications you take. Be sure to say if you smoke or if you ever smoked – even if you quit years ago. Your physician anesthesiologist will take precautions to decrease potential problems related to smoking, and will work closely with you and your care team to ensure the best, safest care.

Get Help Quitting

If you need help to quit smoking, call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669), a free service that can help you stop smoking and stay off cigarettes. You will be connected with a trained counselor who will work with you confidentially to discuss the best methods to help you quit. You'll do this through a series of phone sessions, the first lasting about 45 minutes, the others about 10-15 minutes each. Most people find four or five calls are enough. Depending on your needs, the counselor can arrange to send medications, including nicotine patches, gum and lozenges, as well as advise you regarding medications available without a prescription at your local drug store. You can call the toll-free number anytime to start on your journey to becoming smoke free.

About the American Society of Anesthesiologists®

Every day in hospitals, medical centers, ambulatory surgery centers and physicians' offices across the nation, physician anesthesiologist members of the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA®) provide the highest quality, safest anesthesia care to patients facing surgery or seeking relief from pain. For more information on the field of anesthesiology, visit the American Society of Anesthesiologists online at asahq.org. To learn more about how physician anesthesiologists ensure patient safety, visit asahq.org/WhenSecondsCount.