

Staying smoke-free after surgery

It is important to give your body plenty of time to heal, recover and rest. You will give yourself the best chance for a quicker recovery by not smoking or vaping after surgery.

Try to focus on the many benefits of becoming smoke-free, such as breathing easier and protecting your future health and wellbeing.



Remember the four Ds

Delay acting on the urge to smoke. After a few minutes the craving will weaken when you...

Deep breathe. Take a long slow breath in and slowly release it out again. Repeat three times.

Drink water. Sip it slowly, holding the water in your mouth a little longer.

Do something else. Take your mind off the craving to smoke by calling a friend, listening to music, dancing, doing some gardening, or going for a walk with a friend.

Other helpful resources

For the best chance of becoming **smoke-free**, ask a staff member about **NRT** products and **call** the confidential **Quitline (13 7848)** for support.

Make Smoking History
Visit makesmokinghistory.org.au/tips



Quitline
Call (13 7848) or [chat online](#)



We are proud to be a smoke-free site.
Thank you for not smoking or vaping.

This document can be made available
in alternative formats on request.



Smoking and your surgery

Plan your journey to recovery...
to feel better and get back to doing what you enjoy.



Why should I stop smoking?

As you plan for surgery, you may be thinking more about your health and wanting to make some positive life changes.

Taking steps to improve your health in the lead-up to surgery will better help your body to cope with the anaesthesia and procedure.

The longer you can go without smoking, the more likely you will be to experience a faster recovery and good results.

What are the risks?

Smoking damages your lungs and stresses your heart by raising your blood pressure and starving your body of oxygen.

Continuing to smoke up to your surgery date increases the risk of serious complications, such as:

- Blood clots forming in your veins
- Difficulty breathing during and after surgery
- Chest and surgical infections
- Lung collapse and pneumonia
- Surgical wounds may heal more slowly and have a higher risk of infection.

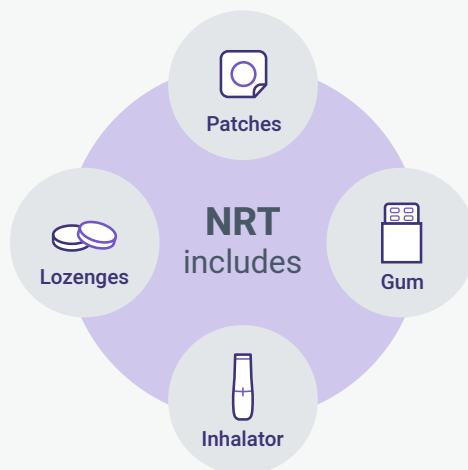
It's best to become smoke-free **six to eight weeks** before your surgery date. Shorter periods of quitting smoking can still benefit your heart and lungs, lower your blood pressure, and strengthen your immune system.

Make a new personal goal and set a **Quit date**.

How can I stop smoking?

Ask a hospital doctor, nurse, midwife or pharmacist about receiving **free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products**.

Nicotine is a highly addictive drug. Quitting is not easy and it may take several attempts to become smoke-free. Your healthcare team would like you to feel comfortable and more at ease before and after your surgery. **NRT** can assist you to manage nicotine withdrawal symptoms such as cravings, difficulty sleeping and irritability.



NRT medicines and products

- Are safer to use than continuing to smoke
- Deliver a lower dose of nicotine without exposing you to the damaging chemicals and toxins in cigarettes and e-cigarettes/vape products
- Can improve your chances of quitting and staying smoke-free, leading to reduced risk of developing diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease and emphysema.

What happens after I stop?

Around **eight hours** after you stop smoking, your heart rate and blood pressure will come down.

After **12 hours** almost all the nicotine and carbon monoxide that come from smoking begin to leave your body.

By **24 hours** the oxygen levels in your blood increase. Circulation improves as more oxygen reaches your heart, lungs, muscles and skin.



After **one week** your lungs' natural cleaning system will be working to gradually remove the unwanted mucus, dust particles and tar.

By **three to four weeks** your body will be better able to fight infections and heal surgical wounds.

At **six weeks** your lungs will produce less mucus, helping you to breathe better during surgery. This will also make you less likely to cough, which can affect your pain levels after surgery.

By **eight weeks** your risk of developing infections, lung and wound complications will be much less than for a person who continues to smoke.