

Smoking and Surgery

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ENT North

Benefits of stopping smoking before surgery

We recommend you quit smoking prior to surgery. The longer you are smoke free prior to surgery the better, but at least 4 weeks is needed to get the best effect. Even if you quit 24 hours prior to surgery, your heart and lung function improves. It is important not to smoke after surgery too. Smoking after surgery can lead to increased pain, bleeding and infection.

Smoking decreases the oxygen and blood supply to the body. This means that it can take longer for the tissue to heal. The heart has to work harder to carry the same amount of oxygen. Smoking destroys the cilia (tiny hairs) that help fight infection and decreases mucous movement. The lungs are more sensitive to stimuli while smoking, which makes the anaesthetic difficult, and may cause bleeding.

Benefits of stopping smoking prior to and after surgery

- Easier to breathe during and after surgery, especially if your nose is blocked
- Less infection
- Faster healing
- Less wound breakdown
- Less bleeding after tonsillectomy
- Better outcome after nasal surgery

Passive smoking

Patients, especially children, that are exposed to second hand smoke have lower oxygen levels during surgery and have more breathing difficulties during general anaesthesia.

Strategies for quitting

- Talk to your GP
- Patches/Gum/Champex
- Quitline