

Smoking or vaping before surgery: What you need to know

If you smoke or vape, it's important to know how these habits can affect your surgery and recovery. Whether you use tobacco or e-cigarettes to manage stress or out of routine, quitting — even temporarily — can make a major difference in your safety and healing.

Tobacco and vaping products contain harmful chemicals that affect nearly every system in your body, and when it comes to surgery, they create more complications.

How smoking or vaping affects your surgery

- **Harder on your body under anesthesia:** Anesthesia puts your body under stress. Smoking makes it harder for your body to cope and increases your risk of infection.
- **Reduced oxygen during surgery:** Nicotine increases your heart rate and blood pressure. At the same time, carbon monoxide lowers the amount of oxygen in your blood — putting added stress on your heart, brain and vital organs. This is especially dangerous if you have heart disease.
- **Higher risk of blood clots:** Chemicals in tobacco and vaping products make your blood thicker, increasing the chance of clots, which can be life-threatening during or after surgery.
- **Lung complications:** Smoking damages the lungs and causes mucus buildup, which can block airways and lead to lung collapse. These issues may worsen after surgery and delay your recovery.
- **Weaker immune system:** Smoking and vaping lower your body's ability to fight infection, especially at the surgical site.
- **Slower healing:** Smoking slows the healing of skin, bones and other tissues, which can make recovery longer and more difficult.
- **Increased medication needs:** Smokers often require higher doses of anesthesia and pain medication because their bodies don't respond to standard amounts as effectively.

Smoking or vaping before surgery: What you need to know (continued)

When should I quit before surgery?

Ideally, quit smoking or vaping at least six weeks before surgery. If that's not possible, aim for at least two weeks. Even stopping 12 hours before surgery can improve how your body responds to anesthesia and heals afterward.

Need help to quit?

Talk with your doctor about medications, counseling and resources to support you. These organizations can also help:

American Lung Association

800-548-8252 | lung.org

Smokefree.gov

800-784-8669 | smokefree.gov

Quitting, even temporarily, is one of the most important steps you can take to support a smooth and safe recovery.

Reference

"Smoking Before Surgery: Is It OK?" Healthadvisor.org, 2014.