

# Your Surgery

at New England Baptist Hospital

## Smoking and Surgery Recommendations to reduce complications

### Our Tobacco Free Environment Policy at NEBH:

Tobacco use remains the most significant preventable cause of death and disability in the United States today. New England Baptist Hospital is committed to providing a completely tobacco free environment incorporating the buildings, grounds, hospital owned vehicles, parking lots, and offsite locations to promote a healing atmosphere for our patients and a healthy environment for our staff, volunteers, physicians, vendors, patient family members and visitors. No individual on hospital property may use tobacco including all smoking types.

### Why should I quit smoking before I have surgery?

By quitting smoking, you will not only reduce the likelihood of experiencing surgery-related complications, but also improve your overall health and even add years to your life. The benefits of quitting smoking include:

- Adding six to eight years to your life.
- Reducing your risk of lung cancer and heart disease.
- Saving an average of \$1,400 each year.
- Reducing your loved ones' exposure to second-hand smoke

### How long before my surgery should I quit smoking?

The earlier you quit, the greater your chances are of avoiding surgery-related complications. It is especially important not to smoke on the day of your surgery. Fortunately, the body begins to heal within hours of quitting. Twelve hours after a person quits, his or her heart and lungs already begin to function better as nicotine and carbon monoxide levels drop. It takes less than a day for blood flow to improve, which reduces the likelihood of post-operative complications. We recommend patients abstain from smoking for as long as possible before and after surgery, but even quitting for a brief period is still beneficial.

### Is it worth quitting if I decide to do so right before surgery, such as the day before the procedure? Could this have a negative impact on the outcome of my surgery?

There is some misinformation with regard to deciding to quit smoking right before surgery. There is no data to support the contention that quitting too close to surgery may cause additional coughing that could impact a patient's lung function. There also is no evidence of any other negative effects of quitting too close to surgery. If you decide to quit smoking the morning of surgery, it can still reduce the rate of surgical complications.

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## Before surgery, should I also quit smoking additional substances such as marijuana?

It is critical that patients quit smoking all substances before surgery, including marijuana. They can have the same effects on surgery as nicotine. For example, they can make patients more or less susceptible to anesthetics. The carbon monoxide found in any kind of smoke affects blood pressure, making it more difficult for the blood to carry oxygen.

Please note: Do not be afraid to tell your anesthesiologist if you have been smoking or using other substances before surgery. This information will remain confidential and is important to your care.

## What risks will I face during surgery if I do not quit smoking?

Anesthesia is safer and more predictable in nonsmokers due to better functioning of the heart, blood vessels, lungs and nervous systems. Smokers require special consideration and treatment when undergoing surgery. The effects of smoking-related diseases increase both anesthetic risks, as well as risks of complications during surgery and recovery.

## Should I quit smoking permanently, or can I resume it after surgery? How long should I wait after surgery before smoking again?

Continuing to smoke after surgery greatly heightens a person's risks of complications, such as infections in the surgical incision. Follow up with your provider about the risks of resuming smoking after surgery.

### Resources to help you quit:

Massachusetts Smokers'  
Helpline:  
1-800-784-8669  
(1-800-QUIT-NOW)  
Free one-on-one support  
over the telephone

Quitworks  
Quit Tips Line  
(24 hour recorded  
messages)  
1-800-943-8284

North American  
Quitline Consortium:  
1-800-398-5489  
[map.naquitline.org](http://map.naquitline.org)  
(Click on your state and  
it will bring you to your  
state's quitline)

Smokefree.gov  
1-800-784-8669  
[smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov)

Find other resources and support groups in Massachusetts at [makesmokinghistory.org](http://makesmokinghistory.org)