

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:

- Reducing your risk of lung cancer and heart disease.
- Will save you money each year.
- Reducing your loved ones' exposure to second-hand smoke.
- Improved healing after surgery.

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 4-6 weeks prior to surgery . To help you do so, we recommend making your surrounding tobacco free, request medication, or other cessation aids to help you quit under the guidance of your physician or PCP and enlist a close friend or family member to help you reach your goal .

How Nicotine Impacts Healing

Nicotine and tobacco products can increase your risk of a complication in the period of time around surgery. Toxins in cigarette smoke affect the body's inflammatory response which in turn affect the body's ability to heal. This can lead to weak scar tissue and increased risk of problems with the wound. Studies have shown that active smokers take longer to recover and stay longer in the hospital following orthopedic surgeries.

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. Tobacco smokers have been found to have poor pain control after orthopedic surgery, and compared to nonsmokers, they require significantly greater doses of narcotic pain medications like opioids.

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. Quitting smoking and avoiding nicotine products can improve your chances of having a successful surgery. 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
(Click on your state and it will bring you to your state's quitline)

Smokefree.gov
1-800-784-8669
smokefree.gov

Find other resources and support groups in Massachusetts at makesmokinghistory.org