



Smoking makes recovery harder by:

- stressing your heart
- affecting your blood pressure
- reducing oxygen in your blood and body tissues
- damaging your lungs.

By stopping smoking well before surgery you will be more likely to have a faster recovery, better wound healing and a shorter stay in hospital, and less likely to need further surgery.

### There is help available

Talk to your doctor, surgeon and pharmacist. Keep your doctor and surgeon informed about your smoking and when you have quit – it may affect your treatment before and after surgery.

This includes consulting with them if you wish to use prescription quitting medications or Nicotine Replacement Therapy products to quit.

Your pharmacist is an excellent source of information on options for Nicotine Replacement Therapy, and can advise on products that are best suited to your lifestyle and dependence level.

## Call the Quitline

 **Quitline 13 7848**

Speak to a trained advisor who can provide support and information to help you quit.

Visit the website: [www.quitnow.info.au](http://www.quitnow.info.au)

### Remember the 4Ds:

**Delay** acting on the urge to smoke. After five minutes the urge to smoke weakens and your resolve to quit will come back.

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

**Drink** water slowly holding it in your mouth a little longer to savour the taste.

**Do** something else to take your mind off smoking. Exercise is a good alternative.

This document can be made available in alternative formats such as computer disc, audio tape or Braille, on request.

# Smoking and surgery



*If you smoke, your risks for serious complications during and after surgery will be much higher. Research strongly recommends stopping smoking at least eight weeks before surgery.*

## **Before surgery – a good opportunity to quit**

Before you have an operation is a good time to stop smoking, because you won't be able to smoke immediately before or after surgery. So why not use this opportunity to take the first step towards stopping for good!

All public hospitals in Western Australia are smoke free, so it is important to discuss your options for Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) with your doctor prior to your hospital stay. Following your surgery, medical advice will require you to remain in your ward, and with appropriate NRT your nicotine dependence can be managed. Staff are not permitted to help you leave the hospital grounds to smoke.

Cutting down in the weeks before surgery does not appear to reduce the risks of wound or lung complications at all. You can cut down before stopping completely, but the recovery of your body will only start from the time you stop completely.

## **What are the risks?**

If you continue to smoke right up to the time you have surgery, you will be more likely to:

- starve your heart of oxygen
- form blood clots in your veins
- find it harder to breathe during and after surgery
- impair the healing of bones, skin and wounds
- reduce the effect of certain drugs.

## **Why does smoking cause these risks?**

Nicotine in cigarette smoke increases your heart rate and blood pressure, making your heart work harder so that it needs more oxygen. The carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke competes with the oxygen in your blood, making it harder to get the oxygen you need for your heart and body.

Chemicals in cigarette smoke make your blood thicker, stickier and more likely to clot, and can paralyse and destroy the cilia in your lungs (tiny hairs that act like brooms) which work to keep your lungs clear. Smoking increases the amount of mucus in your lungs, and narrows your airways. This can increase the likelihood of your airways, (and the air sacs in your lungs) partially collapsing, making it harder to breathe.

Smoking decreases your resistance to infection, and you will have a higher risk for chest and wound infections after surgery. You are more likely to have longer healing times, problems with new scars opening up, and bad scarring. Smoking can also slow down and interfere with the healing of bones and other body tissues.

## **Smoking and anaesthetic**

It is important that your anaesthetist is aware of your smoking. You should notify your anaesthetist if you smoke and discuss your options prior to your surgery. Many surgical procedures require you to have an anaesthetic drug which can put your body under stress and may lower your resistance to infection. If you smoke, your body is less able to cope with the stress this may cause. Chemicals in cigarette smoke interfere with the rate at which certain drugs break down in your body; as a result, you may need higher doses of anaesthetic or pain relieving medication.

## **After surgery – staying stopped**

After surgery it is important that you do not start smoking again, even if you only quit 12 hours before surgery.