



## Stop Before Your Op

**If you are due to have an operation, one of the most important things you can do to improve your recovery is to give up smoking.**

Giving up smoking for just two days before your operation can make a huge difference but giving up a few weeks or months before your stay is even more beneficial. Some surgery requires you to be nicotine free (no smoking or nicotine replacement) for three months prior to surgery so you should check with your doctor/nurse if this applies to you.

### **Why is it important to give up before my operation?**

Quitting smoking before your surgery or during your hospital stay can speed up your recovery as well as:

- Reduce heart, lung, and wound related complications
- Reduce wound healing time
- Reduce the time it takes for bones to heal after fracture repair
- Reduce your length of stay in hospital

The Trust is a smoke free environment so there are no facilities for smoking anywhere in the hospital.

### **What happens if I don't want to give up smoking?**

#### **Plastic surgery:**

To be successful, plastic surgery reconstruction needs the wound to heal well. Unfortunately this is compromised by nicotine. Nicotine causes narrowing of the small blood vessels and dramatically increases the risks of wound healing problems, infections and failure of your treatment. To increase the chances of success of your plastic surgery, you **must** therefore be nicotine free (this includes cigarettes, vapes containing nicotine, nicotine patches and gum etc.) for four weeks before and at least two weeks after surgery. A test (which tests for nicotine in the urine) is carried out around one to two weeks before surgery and your operation is likely to be cancelled if the test is positive.

**You are strongly advised to use this opportunity to stop smoking for good.**

#### **If you continue smoking you need to realise that smokers who have surgery:**

- Have more anaesthetic related complications and a longer recovery
- Have wounds that take longer to heal and are more likely to get infected
- Have a reduced chance of plastic surgery skin grafts and flaps healing
- Have an increased chance of fractures to bones not healing (non-union)
- Are more likely to get a chest infection after surgery
- Have a higher risk of dangerous blood clots after surgery
- Remain in hospital longer and need more pain relief
- Whilst uncommon, it is also a sad fact that smokers are more likely to die in hospital following their surgery

### When will I see the benefits of giving up smoking?

As soon as you stop smoking your body begins to recover. Within the first hour your body begins to get rid of tobacco poisons, circulation improves and blood pressure and pulse return to normal. After eight hours the levels of carbon monoxide in your blood will reduce by half and your oxygen levels will return to normal. After just a few weeks you will really notice that your lungs are clearer and you have more energy.

Giving up smoking six to eight weeks before your surgery is found to have the most benefit but even stopping 24 hours before your surgery is beneficial. You should never smoke on the day of your surgery.

### Where can I go for extra help?

**You don't need to do it alone!** We understand it's hard to quit smoking, but you are up to four times more likely to quit with help and support. We can offer advice and help you access the right NHS services to assist you, whether that is one to one sessions, group help, or advice on nicotine replacement or other medications. (Not all surgical patients can take nicotine replacement but we can help you check this with your consultant or surgical team).

Patients in Birmingham can download the "Quit with Bella" app for free, or find local services by searching "Stop smoking services" at [www.birmingham.gov.uk](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk)

You can also visit the NHS Stop Smoking Service at [www.smokefree.nhs.uk](http://www.smokefree.nhs.uk). **Quit smoking - Better Health** for details of ways to quit, for support and for services local to you.

**Set a date to quit and  
'Stop before your op'  
It could be the best decision you ever make!**

### Vaping

Although overall substantially less harmful than smoking, vaping is not risk-free. Vapes, especially ones with a high content of nicotine can pose risks of complications or delayed healing to both flap surgery and limb reconstructive surgery and can potentially slow down or delay bone healing.

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email [patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk).