



Stopping Smoking Before Orthopaedic Surgery

Why you should stop smoking before your operation

We all know that smoking affects our long-term health. Smoking also greatly increases the risk of complications during and after orthopaedic surgery. You can reduce this risk if you stop smoking as early as possible before your operation.

You are strongly advised to use this opportunity to stop smoking for good. With help and support, you may find it easier than you thought to stop. Smoking is addictive and it is the nicotine that makes it addictive. However, you can get lots of different types of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) to help you manage your withdrawal symptoms.

There are other products available on prescription that can help you go smokefree, such as Zyban and Champix.

You can buy electronic cigarettes (known as vaping,) from many high street retailers or pharmacies; However, these may still cause some post-operative complications (such as bone healing) due to the nicotine.

Does stopping smoking before an operation do any good?

There is good evidence that stopping smoking before your operation:

- Reduces lung, heart and infectious complications.
- Reduces bone healing time after surgery - smokers are twice as likely to experience non-union (bone fails to heal) than non-smokers.
- Reduces the failure rate of implants (such as ankle, knee and hip replacements)
- Reduces length of stay in hospital.
- Reduces anaesthesia related complications.
- Improves wound healing time due to increased oxygen to the tissues.
- Improves calcium absorption and Vitamin D - required for bone health
- Reduces breathing problems. (If you smoke you have a one in three risk of post-operative breathing problems. This can be reduced to one in ten if you stop smoking eight weeks before the operation.)

Take home message

Smoking complications can be reduced from 52% to 18% if smoking interventions happen 6-8 weeks prior to surgery

What Free NHS help is available?

There are a range of different methods to help you become smokefree:

- Your GP Practice may have a registered Stop Smoking Advisor who can help you to stop smoking. Ask for further information at your GP Practice.
- Contact your local NHS Stop Smoking Service for free group or one-to-one help and advice



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from trained experts. Let them know that you are going to have an operation so they can give you priority.

- Ask your local Pharmacist if they have a trained Stop Smoking Advisor you can see for free one-to-one help and support.
- The NHS Smoking Helpline and website are always there to give free advice, help and support. For help and support visit www.smokefree.nhs.uk

By stopping smoking you can get back to a normal life faster, saving money, being active with your family and have better health long into the future.

The health benefits of quitting smoking start almost immediately (see below table) and are evidence based.

20 mins	Reduction in blood pressure, pulse rate, and normalisation of temperature of hands and feet
8 hours	Nicotine levels in blood have fallen by over 90%.
12-24 hrs	Normalisation of oxygen (12hrs) and carbon monoxide levels (24 hrs) in the blood.
48 hours	Sense of smell and taste is noticeably improved.
72 hours	Now 100% nicotine-free. Improvement in breathing.
2 weeks to 3 months	Risk of heart attack begins to fall and lungs begin to improve.
3 weeks to 3 months	Decrease in respiratory symptoms (cough and breathlessness).
1 year	Excess risk of heart attack and stroke decreased to less than half that of a smoker.
5 to 15 years	Heart attack and Stroke risk has declined to that of a non-smoker
10 years	Risk of being diagnosed with lung cancer decreases to between 30% and 50% of that for a continuing smoker. Risk of death from lung cancer has declined by almost half for an average smoker (one pack per day). Risk of pancreatic cancer has declined to that of a non-smoker, while risk of cancer of the mouth, throat and oesophagus has also declined. Risk of developing diabetes is now similar to that of a never smoker.
13 years	Risk of smoking-induced tooth loss has declined to that of a non- smoker.
15 years	Risk of heart attacks is now that of a person who has never smoked.
20 years	Excess risk of death from all smoking related causes, including lung disease and cancer, has now reduced to that of a never smoker. Risk of pancreatic cancer reduced to that of a never-smoker

Other benefits of stopping smoking include:

- Protecting the health of family and contacts by reducing their exposure to second-hand smoke.
- Increasing life expectancy. Smoking can shorten life expectancy by over 10 years.
- Reduce risk in children from bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma attacks, meningitis and ear infections.



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- Currently, a 20-a-day smoker of a premium cigarette brand will spend about £3,200 a year on cigarettes.

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