Quitting Smoking Before Your Surgery

What you need to know

This handout is for patients who are planning to have reconstructive surgery at University of Washington Medical Center.

For Your Safety

At your clinic visit today, we talked with you about quitting smoking before your surgery.

**Remember, you must not use tobacco or other nicotine products for at least 6 weeks before your surgery.**

This is for your safety. It will help ensure the best outcome for your procedure and lowers your risk of having complications.

Nicotine Test

We will ask you to return to the clinic 2 to 3 weeks before your surgery for a nicotine test. To pass this test, you must be completely nicotine-free for at least 4 weeks. If the test shows any nicotine in your system, we will have to reschedule your surgery.

**Note that if you smoke even 1 cigarette during the 4 weeks before your nicotine test, your test result will likely be positive. If this happens, we will have to reschedule your surgery.**

Health Benefits

There is a long list of the health benefits of quitting smoking. When you quit smoking, you lower your risk of having many health problems, including: a heart attack; lung disease; cancer of the lungs, throat, esophagus, pancreas, and bladder; stomach ulcers; asthma attacks and chronic cough; skin wrinkles; and problems with sexual function.

Withdrawal

Many people have withdrawal symptoms when they quit smoking. These symptoms may include problems sleeping, feeling irritable and frustrated,
anxiety, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating. These symptoms are usually worst the first few days after you quit smoking. They will lessen over a few weeks.

**Resources to Help You Quit**

It can be hard to quit smoking. But, there are some things that can help you quit. Please talk with your primary care provider (PCP) about your options.

- Your doctor may talk with you about medicines that you can take to help you quit smoking, both before and after surgery. These include verenicline (Chantix) and bupropion (Wellbutrin). If you are interested, talk with your PCP to learn more and get a prescription.

- **Please note that patches, gum, and e-cigarettes contain some nicotine. You cannot use these for at least 6 weeks before your surgery.**

**National Quitline**

There is also a national smoking cessation quitline you can call. A quitline is a toll-free phone center staffed by experts in helping you quit smoking. The phone number is **800.QUIT.NOW** (800.784.8669).

**Other Help**

For more help in quitting smoking, visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Smokefree website at [http://smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov). You can sign up for text messaging, get a smartphone app, or sign up for other programs to keep you on track with your quit plan.

**Tips to Help You Quit**

- If someone else in your household or at your work smokes, make a plan to quit together.

- Talk with your family, friends, and/or PCP about your plan to quit. Ask for their support.

- Avoid places where you usually get the urge to smoke.

- Exercise often to help reduce cravings.

- Eat a healthy diet. Include plenty of fresh vegetables and fruits.

- Avoid alcohol. Drinking may increase the urge to smoke.

- Think about the times during the day when you usually smoke. Plan ahead to spend that time in a different way. Also plan for how to deal with situations that usually trigger your urge to smoke.