

# Nicotine Use and 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 stopping any nicotine use before and after 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 such as delayed wound healing.



***Talk with your primary care provider if you have any questions about how to quit smoking.***

## 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 6 weeks. If the test shows any nicotine in your system, we will have to reschedule your surgery.

Note that if you use any nicotine products such as cigarette, dip, vape, patch, and gum 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, irritability, frustration, 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.



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## 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.

### 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 *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.
- To help reduce cravings, exercise often.
- 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.

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

#### **During Clinic Hours (Monday through Friday except holidays, 8am to 5pm):**

If you have any questions or concerns, message your surgeon through MyChart. Please include a photo if it will help explain your concern.

You may also call the Center for Reconstructive Surgery at 206.598.1217, option 2.

#### **Urgent Needs Outside of Clinic Hours:**

If you have an urgent care need after hours, on weekends, or holidays, please call 206.598.6190 and ask to speak to the plastic surgeon on call.