

Patient information factsheet

Stopping smoking before your cardiac operation

Stopping smoking is an important part of preparing your body for an operation and for recovering afterwards. This factsheet contains some helpful tips on how to stop smoking before your operation. We hope it helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

Benefits of stopping smoking before your operation

Smoking greatly increases a person's risk of experiencing complications during and after an operation.

Stopping smoking before your operation will reduce your risk of the following complications by up to 50%:

- wound complications and healing delays
- infection
- heart and lung complications
- admission to intensive care
- a longer stay in hospital
- emergency re-admission to hospital
- post-operative mortality (deaths that occur within 30 days of a surgical procedure)

When to stop smoking

Stopping smoking is one of the best actions you can make before having an operation, but also for your long-term health.

For the best results, you should stop smoking **four to eight weeks before** your planned operation. However, it's never too late to stop smoking, so don't worry if this isn't possible. Your body will start to repair itself just 20 minutes after your last cigarette. Please see the table below for more information.

Time after your last cigarette	Effect on your body
20 minutes	Heart rate (how hard your heart is working) Your heart rate will start to return to normal.
2 hours	Blood pressure (the force at which blood is circulated around your body) Your blood pressure will start to return to normal, reducing stress on your heart and organs.

Time after your last cigarette	Effect on your body
8 hours	Carbon monoxide (a toxic gas in cigarette smoke that, when inhaled, interferes with your body's ability to use oxygen) The amount of carbon monoxide in your body will start to return to normal, improving your breathing ability and energy level.
2 weeks	Exercise capacity (the maximum amount of physical exertion that you can sustain) Your heart and lungs will become more efficient, and exercise will become easier.
3 to 4 weeks	Immune system (how your body defends itself against infections) Your immune system will start to heal and get stronger, improving your wound healing and ability to fight infections.
6 to 8 weeks	Lungs Smoking can have a very bad impact on your lungs and lead to further lung diseases. The inflammation in your lungs will start to decrease and your lung function and mucus production levels will start to improve.
1 year	Heart Smoking puts excessive strain on your heart. Your risk of having a heart attack will reduce by half.

Please note that in some circumstances, if you do not stop smoking before your operation, we may have to cancel or postpone it.

Vaping

As with smoking, vaping should also be avoided before having an operation. Vaping is when you inhale nicotine as a water-based vapour via an electronic cigarette (e-cigarette) or another vaping device.

Although vaping is less harmful than smoking, it still has risks due to the nicotine. It is important to note that the long-term effects of vaping on the body are not yet fully understood.

How to stop smoking

Stopping smoking is easier when you have a plan and the right support, including:

- expert help from a stop smoking service
- stop-smoking products
- techniques to help manage cravings and withdrawal symptoms

It is important to find what works best for you.

You may also find the following tips helpful leading up to your operation:

- Set a date to stop smoking by.
- Use the time between now and this date to set a plan and get organised.
- Ask your general practitioner (GP) or a pharmacist about medication that can help with stopping smoking.
- Find out about stop smoking services near you.
- Ask your friends and family for support.

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- Make a list of triggers and how to avoid them.
- Have a plan for dealing with cravings. For example, exercise, distractions and nicotine replacement therapies.
- Plan some treats using the money you will save from not buying cigarettes.
- Remember, each craving only lasts for 90 seconds, and withdrawal symptoms will reduce after two weeks.

Smoking support

For help and advice on stopping smoking, please speak to a member of your healthcare team.

You are up to four times more likely to stop smoking for good if you receive help from an NHS stop smoking service. These services offer non-judgemental advice, nicotine replacement therapy and behavioural support. Find out where your nearest NHS stop smoking service is online at: www.nhs.uk/smokefree

Alternatively, call the free Smokefree National Helpline on **0300 123 1044** to speak to a specialist adviser.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

If you are an inpatient

Please speak to your ward nurse or a member of your healthcare team.

If you are an outpatient

Cardiac surgical case managers

Telephone: **023 8120 8686** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

Email: ncm@uhs.nhs.uk

Useful links

For more information on preparing for your operation, please read our 'Preparing for surgery' leaflet: www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Surgery/Preparing-for-surgery-3167-PIL.pdf

www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking

www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**