



Northern Care Alliance
NHS Group

Stop before your Op

An information guide



Stop before your Op

If you are waiting for an operation then it is very important you stop smoking as soon as possible. Smoking greatly increases the risk of complications during and after surgery. Some operations are not even an option for smokers

- Smokers are far more likely to have anaesthesia related complications
- Smoking can delay your recovery and the wounds are slower to heal

Stopping Smoking has major benefits to your health; especially if you stop smoking before you come into hospital. This leaflet will provide you with the information and the benefits from quitting smoking 6-8 weeks before your operation.

On average there are 23% of male and female smokers in the general public of the North West (*Cancer Research UK, 2012*). Smoking does increase the risk of complications after your surgery.

By stopping smoking before your operation there are many health benefits including:

- Decreased wound related problems
- Reduced length of admission
- Increased rate of bone healing
- Reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, and premature death
- Reduces risk of complications whilst under sedation

Why does smoking put me at more risk?

Smokers' health is generally poorer than that of non-smokers. This is hardly surprising, given that smoking is known to play a part in many different diseases. Cigarettes also contain over 4000 chemicals many of which are poisonous.

These include:

- **Carbon monoxide** - a gas found in car exhaust fumes
- **Ammonia** - found in cleaning products
- **Acetone** - ingredient of paint stripper and nail varnish remover
- **Benzene** - found in petrol fumes
- **Sulphuric acid** - used in fertilisers and explosives
- **Hydrogen cyanide** - a deadly poison
- **Formaldehyde** - used to preserve dead bodies

Over 40 of the chemicals in cigarettes are known to cause:

- Cancers
- Strokes
- Chronic bronchitis and emphysema
- Increased coughing and sneezing
- Gum disease and bad breath
- Peptic ulcer
- Affected fertility
- Gangrene
- Defective vision
- Shortness of breath
- Coronary heart disease
- Aortic aneurysm
- Peripheral vascular Disease

Examples of surgical risks for smokers:

- **Plastic and reconstructive surgery**

Slowing down the healing of wounds is a big problem for smokers having plastic or reconstructive surgery. This type of surgery usually involves the transfer of flaps of skin from one part of the body to another. To survive, the skin needs a healthy blood supply and lots of oxygen. Because smokers have a reduced blood flow, the skin being transferred has a much lower chance of survival. Smokers have about 12.5 times greater risk of plastic surgery not being successful.

- **Hand surgery**

Reduced blood flow is a great concern for hand surgery because there are so many tiny blood vessels in the hands. Smoking a single cigarette can reduce the blood flow to the hand by 40% for up to an hour. This would cause severe shortage of oxygen needed to aid healing.

- **Back surgery**

Smokers' bones are slower to grow and repair than nonsmokers' bones. When smokers need surgery to fuse the vertebrae in the back they are three to four times more likely to have problems. The bones can grow one centimetre every two months. Smokers can take on average three months to grow the same amount of bone.

Smoking effects your wounds

Wound health is effected after surgery if you are a smoker. Smoking has been identified in increasing the length of recovery time for wounds; a chemical in cigarettes called carbon monoxide reduces the oxygen being carried in the blood and slows down wound healing .

By stopping smoking before your operation you are allowing the blood in your body to carry more oxygen to the wound which can reduce the length of time you spend in hospital recovering .

Smoking hinders your breathing

If you smoke you are more likely to get a chest infection after surgery leading too problems with your breathing.

By stopping smoking before your operation you are enabling your lungs to increase the amount of oxygen being delivered to your vital organs and reduce the risk of any breathing problems (*The Royal College of Anaesthetics*).

Reduce the risk of infection

By smoking a cigarette it weakens your lungs ability to fight off any infection that you may get after an operation. Ensuring that you are smoke free before your operation, and then staying stopped after, will reduce the risk of any chest or wound infection.

Studies show that people who have stopped smoking 6-8 weeks prior to undergoing an operation had fewer wound infections (*Moller, Villebro, Pedersen & Tonneson, 2002*).

After surgery

By being smoke free after surgery, it allows your body to recover and heal to its full potential. By being smoke free it reduces the amount of stress on your heart and enables the oxygen to travel to your body tissue, skin and bones. The best way to ensure that you are going to recover quickly and effectively is by being smoke free before your operation.

Speak to your Pre-operative nurse, Surgeon, or GP about your support before and after surgery .

How do I stop / What should I do?

Everyone is different when it comes to stopping smoking; you need to choose the best way for you. We recommend that you contact your GP.

They will be able to help you identify the best way in becoming smoke free before your operation.

Smokers guide to coping during your hospital stay

If you think you might have problems stopping and are worried you won't cope in hospital without your cigarettes, try using some of the advice that we give below:

- Do not take cigarettes, e-cigarettes and lighters into hospital
- Avoid taking in clothes that smell of smoke
- Ask family and friends not to smoke before visiting
- Do something to take your mind off smoking for instance reading, knitting or doing crosswords
- Have a bottle of drinking water close to hand
- Switch to a different drink like orange juice, if you usually have a cigarette with your tea or coffee
- Have healthy snacks like fruit or vegetables close to hand
- Use nicotine replacement treatment like patches or gum to help you manage without smoking

If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service

Jeśli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z działem tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych

اگر انگریزی آپ کی پہلی زبان نہیں ہے اور آپ کو مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو ، براہ کرم ترجمانی اور ترجمہ خدمت سے رابطہ کریں

Dacă engleza nu este prima ta limbă și ai nevoie de ajutor, te rugăm să contactezi Serviciul de interpretare și traducere

ইংরাজী যদি আপনার প্রথম ভাষা না হয় এবং আপনার সাহায্যের প্রয়োজন হয় তবে অনুগ্রহ করে দোভাষী এবং অনুবাদ পরিষেবাটিতে যোগাযোগ করুন

إذا لم تكن الإنجليزية هي لغتك الأولى وتحتاج إلى مساعدة ، فيرجى الاتصال بخدمة الترجمة الشفوية والتحريرية

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To improve our care environment for Patients, Visitors and Staff, **Northern Care Alliance NHS Group** is Smoke Free including buildings, grounds & car parks.

For advice on stopping smoking contact the Specialist Stop Smoking Service on 01706 517 522

For general enquiries please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0161 604 5897


For enquiries regarding clinic appointments, clinical care and treatment please contact 0161 624 0420 and the Switchboard Operator will put you through to the correct department / service

The Northern Care Alliance NHS Group (NCA) is one of the largest NHS organisations in the country, employing 17,000 staff and providing a range of hospital and community healthcare services to around 1 million people across Salford, Oldham, Bury, Rochdale and surrounding areas. Our Care Organisations are responsible for providing our services, delivering safe, high quality and reliable care to the local communities they serve.

The NCA brings together Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust and the hospitals and community services of The Royal Oldham Hospital, Fairfield General Hospital in Bury, and Rochdale Infirmary (currently part of The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust).

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