As carbon monoxide leaves your body within 24 hours, even quitting for a few days before surgery can reduce your risk.

If you quit six months before your operation, and do not have permanent lung damage from smoking, you will reduce your risk of breathing problems after surgery to the same level as a person who has never smoked.

**Do you need more advice and support?**

Many smokers try to quit a few times before they are successful in quitting for good. Getting help and support increases your chances of success.

**You can quit, we can help**

Contact the HSE QUIT team for one-to-one personal support
Freephone: 1800 201 203
Freetext: Text QUIT to 50100
Email: support@quit.ie
Web: www.quit.ie
Facebook: www.facebook.com/HSEquit

**Face-to-face clinics**
We offer quit-smoking clinics and groups in many areas. You can find contact details on www.quit.ie/clinics or contact the QUIT Team on 1800 201 203

**Health professionals**
Your family doctor (GP), practice nurse, public health nurse or pharmacist can all offer advice and support when you are quitting smoking.
The best thing you can do for your health is to stop smoking. It is never too late to quit.

Now that you are waiting to have surgery, it is especially important for you to quit.

There are immediate benefits to quitting before your surgery:

- there is less chance that you will get a chest infection or have breathing problems following the anaesthetic;
- your wound will heal better and quicker because there will be more oxygen in your blood to reach your wound;
- your bone healing will improve;
- your time in the recovery room and your stay in hospital will be shortened.

Why does smoking increase my risk of chest problems after surgery?

If you smoke, you may need more anaesthesia during the surgery. After surgery, you will be at much greater risk of having breathing difficulties or a chest infection. This is because the tar and poisons in tobacco smoke irritate your lungs and make it harder for them to clear mucus.

If you smoke, you may need to spend a longer time in the recovery room and you may need more oxygen. This is because the carbon monoxide in tobacco smoke robs the blood of oxygen. But if you quit before surgery, your oxygen levels will return to normal quicker and you will get better faster.

Why does smoking cause poor wound healing?

When there is not enough oxygen and nutrients reaching your wound, your healing will be poorer and slower. Carbon monoxide in tobacco smoke robs blood of oxygen and the nicotine makes blood vessels tighten. This damages the cells that carry the essential nutrients which help the wound to heal. Good wound healing occurs when blood with plenty of oxygen in it reaches your wound.

Slow wound healing is a big problem for smokers who need reconstructive or plastic surgery as a smoker’s skin may not have the healthy blood supply it needs. This increases the risk of your surgery not being successful.

Plastic surgery wounds need very good oxygen levels to heal properly. Some people are not suitable for plastic or reconstructive surgery simply because they smoke. You should stop smoking for good before plastic surgery.

Why are bone injuries slower to heal in smokers?

A broken bone recovers when new bone is made. In non-smokers, bones will grow one centimetre every two months. In smokers, it can take three months for this to happen.

How soon should I quit smoking before surgery?

The earlier you quit before your surgery the better.