

# It pays to quit smoking before surgery

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People who start nicotine replacement therapy at least four weeks before surgery can halve their risk of poor wound healing. This is what the German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG) concludes in information published on [informedhealthonline.org](http://informedhealthonline.org) today.

[Quitting smoking](#) in times of stress is not easy

"It is not easy to quit smoking just before an operation," appreciates Professor Peter Sawicki, the Institute's Director. "But people who smoke are more likely to have complications after surgery than people who do not smoke," he adds.

IQWiG has now analysed current research results that show that nicotine replacement therapy can help people quit smoking and avoid complications after surgery. Nicotine replacement therapy helps reduce withdrawal symptoms when people stop smoking by giving them nicotine through a patch or chewing gum. Trials showed that only 14 percent of the patients who smoked had problems with wound healing if they had nicotine replacement therapy at least four weeks before surgery, compared to 28 percent of the patients who did not have [nicotine](#) replacement therapy. Poor wound healing is one of the most common complications after surgery.

## Lack of oxygen can cause poor wound healing

"[Anaesthetics](#) and surgery put a strain on the body's oxygen supply as it is," explains Professor Sawicki. "Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen

that is available in the blood even more, making it more difficult for wounds to heal - a process which requires oxygen."

Source: Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care

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