Tobacco and Wound Healing after Surgery

Quitting before surgery
- In order to heal well after surgery, you must quit using tobacco products.
- Quitting at least 4 to 6 weeks before and up to 8 weeks after surgery will help surgical wounds heal quicker and be less likely to get infected.

Tobacco use and surgery
- Tobacco can have 7,000 chemicals.
- Smoking hurts the function of special cells that help wounds heal and stop infection.
- Oxygen is needed for wounds to heal properly.
- Just 10 minutes of smoking can decrease the amount of oxygen in tissue for up to 1 hour! This means that a person who smokes 20 or more cigarettes each day has very little oxygen getting to their tissue during the day.
- Wound dressings absorb cigarette smoke, just like drapes, curtains, wallpaper, clothing and furniture do. This makes it even harder for people’s wounds to heal who live in homes where there is smoke.

Tips for quitting
- Set a quit date. This is the day that you officially stop using tobacco.
- Get rid of all ash trays, lighters, spit cups and all tobacco products in your home, vehicle and work place.
- Tell others you are quitting. Other people can be a great support!
- Consider a “no smoking” or “no tobacco” rule where you live.
- Talk to your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, dentist or other health care provider. They can help you quit.
- Consider using medicine to help you quit. You can buy nicotine gum, nicotine lozenges and nicotine patches at the drug store. Other medicines need a prescription. Ask your pharmacist or other health care provider for more information.
- Keep track of when you use tobacco. Consider keeping a list of:
  - What times you use tobacco.
  - How you feel when you use tobacco at these times.
  - What you were doing before and while using tobacco.
- Use this information to come up with new behaviors to replace your tobacco use. Take a walk, chew on a straw, wash dishes, play a video game or call a friend.
• Try the “4 D’s”:
  > Delay. See if you can wait 5 before lighting up. Even a few minutes can help a craving to pass.
  > Deep breathe. Count to 5 for each breath in and each breath out. Repeat 10 times.
  > Drink fluids. Drink liquids throughout the day to help clear nicotine from your body. Try to drink 8 (8-ounce) glasses each day.
  > Do something else. Take a walk, knit, crochet, read a book, play a game or talk to a friend. Try to keep your hands and your mind busy.

Talk with your doctor if you have questions about quitting tobacco use, or call the Ohio Quit Line at 1-800-Quit-Now or 1-800-784-8669.