



GENDER TRANSITION & TOBACCO USE

WHY QUITTING TOBACCO IS IMPORTANT FOR A SAFE TRANSITION AND TRANSGENDER HEALTH

Transgender people deserve reliable, supportive information when considering medical transition. Due to targeted anti-LGBTQ+ messaging¹ and the stress from systemic oppression, transgender adults smoke at higher rates (**35.5%**), compared to cisgender adults (those whose gender identity corresponds with their sex assigned at birth) at **20.7%**.²

The chemicals in tobacco products may negatively interfere with the hormones used for gender-affirming medical transition, leading to unpredictable physical changes, or a need for higher dosages of hormones to achieve the desired physical results. In addition, the risks inherent in smoking such as cardiovascular disease, strokes, and sudden death may be elevated with some forms of hormones.



Tobacco use is known to put stress on the heart and blood vessels and increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes. The addition of some forms of hormones used in transition may add to this risk. The good news is that stopping smoking reduces these risks and makes transition safer.³



Estimates show smoking tobacco increases the risk for coronary heart disease or stroke by 2 to 4 times. Quitting will help lower levels of bad cholesterol and triglycerides – reducing your risk in as little as one day.⁴

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SUPPORTING TOBACCO-FREE LGBTQ COMMUNITIES

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HOW DOES TOBACCO AFFECT GENDER AFFIRMING SURGERY?

Quitting smoking even the day before surgery can lower risks of complications. Be sure to talk to your doctor. The earlier a person quits the better — preferably a week or more before surgery. Abstaining from tobacco use is also recommended during recovery from surgery.⁴

- Continuing to smoke or using nicotine products (like other tobacco, vaping, or e-cigarettes) can **delay surgery**, complicate the anesthesia, increase chances of scarring, and harm chances of success.
- Individuals can encounter breathing problems during or after surgery, and are at greater risk of developing complications such as heart attack, stroke, sepsis or shock.
- Smoking can inhibit proper healing: nicotine narrows blood vessels, which **reduces blood flow**, and cuts the amount of blood and oxygen reaching surgical areas.
- Smoking during recovery from surgery **increases the chances of infection** at the surgical incision site⁶, and may result in **skin tissue death**.⁷

Transition-related care is a major decision in supporting your mental and physical well-being. It can also be a powerful reminder of your bodily autonomy—something that Big Tobacco tries to undermine by getting our bodies hooked on their products. Quitting is one way to reclaim that autonomy and free your body from the toxins found in tobacco products.

START YOUR QUIT JOURNEY TODAY

To obtain help for quitting tobacco contact:

Kick It California

1-800-300-8086

Text “Quit Smoking” or “Quit Vaping” to 66819

1. National Library of Medicine. “Negative Transgender-Related Media Messages Are Associated with Adverse Mental Health Outcomes in a Multistate Study of Transgender Adults” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 12 January 2021. <<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7826438/>>.
2. Transgender Use of Cigarettes, Cigars, and E-Cigarettes in a National Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, [e-pub 2017 Jan 13].
3. Cardiovascular Health Maintenance in Aging Individuals: The Implications for Transgender Men and Women on Hormone Therapy, January 2021 <[https://www.endocrinepractice.org/article/S1530-891X\(20\)48315-6/abstract](https://www.endocrinepractice.org/article/S1530-891X(20)48315-6/abstract)>.
4. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014 [accessed 2017 Apr 20].
5. Healthline. “Upcoming Surgery? Here’s Why You’ll Want to Avoid Smoking” October 4 2023. <<https://www.healthline.com/health/smoking-before-surgery#risks>>.
6. American Society of Anesthesiologists. “Risks: Smoking.” <<https://madeforthismoment.asahq.org/preparing-for-surgery/risks/smoking/>>.
7. San Francisco Tobacco-Free Project. “Addressing Tobacco Use: A Toolkit for HIV Prevention Providers” August 2016. <https://sanfranciscotobaccofreeproject.org/wp-content/uploads/HIV_TobaccoToolkit_042117-1.pdf>.