Not Smoking After Bone Surgery Speeds Healing

Smokers recover better from surgery to repair a broken bone if they quit smoking, state Swedish researchers. The new study included daily smokers who underwent emergency surgery for an acute fracture and were offered a smoking cessation program that began within a few days after surgery and continued for six weeks.

The patients who quit smoking healed more quickly and experienced fewer complications than those who continued smoking, the investigators found. “Our results indicate that a smoking cessation intervention program during the first six weeks after acute fracture surgery decreases the risk of postoperative complications by nearly half,” Dr. Hans Nasell, senior surgical consultant at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, said in a news release.

The study is published in the June issue of the *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery*.

“The smoking cessation program requires only about two to three hours of support from the nursing staff, which is significantly less time than would be required for the treatment of side effects such as poor wound healing, which can occur as a side effect of smoking,” Nasell said.

Previous studies have found that quitting smoking before surgery offers significant benefits. “In elective surgery, smoking cessation can become part of a plan pre-operatively to reduce risks during and after surgery,” Nasell said. “But with emergency surgery, such as acute fracture surgery, stopping smoking before surgery is not an option. Therefore, it's very encouraging to see that stopping smoking following surgery offers some of the same benefits as preoperative smoking cessation.”

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