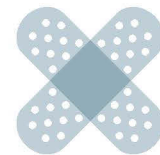


WOUND HEALING & TOBACCO USE



How does smoking affect a wound on my body?

We all experience wounds from things like falling down, surgery, burns, and medical conditions (e.g., diabetes). For wounds to heal well, proper amounts of blood and oxygen are needed.

When you smoke, wounds take longer to heal. That's because ingredients in tobacco can damage your blood vessels, decrease the amount of blood flowing to wounds, and decrease oxygen in your blood.

Wounds that take longer to heal are more likely to become infected. Smoking just one cigarette a day can have a negative effect on the body's ability to heal. Smoking can also affect wounds by:

- Decreasing the strength of scar tissue
- Decreasing the chance of a successful skin graft
- Causing blood clots to form near wounds

What happens if I get a wound infection?

Possible symptoms

- Pain and fever
- Unpleasant smell and swelling at the wound site
- Gangrene (death of tissue due to infection or poor blood flow)

Possible treatments

- Antibiotic treatment (by mouth or vein)
- Regular wound treatment (at home or clinic)
- Amputation
- Hospitalization

If I quit smoking, how will that affect my wounds?

If you quit smoking it will:

- Decrease the chance that your wound will become infected
- Help your wound heal faster
- Help you become active sooner because you'll have better wound healing

I want to quit using tobacco — how do I get started?

- Call VA's tobacco quitline at **1-855-QUIT-VET** (1-855-784-8838) Monday–Friday, available in English & Spanish
- Sign up for VA's SmokefreeVET text messaging program—text the word **VET** to **47848** (or **VETesp** to **47848** for Spanish) or visit smokefree.gov/VET
- Talk to your VA primary care provider or wound care specialist about tobacco cessation medications and counseling that can help you quit
- Visit publichealth.va.gov/smoking



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Veterans Health Administration
Office of Public Health

