

SMOKING/SECONDARY SMOKE/ TOBACCO PRODUCTS AND THEIR AFFECTS ON WOUND HEALING

All procedures in plastic surgery are performed to improve form and, in some cases, function. Our goal as Plastic Surgeons is to have a perfect form and scar. Unfortunately, smoking and secondary smoke affect wound healing in a potentially devastating way. Any exposure to smoke, either directly or indirectly, can result in poor wound healing, delayed wound healing, skin loss necessitating skin grafting, increased risk in wound infection and loss of skin and deeper tissues. Decreased blood supply to those areas is the cause of these complications. Nicotine is the root cause of the decreased blood supply in that it causes constriction of the capillaries and small blood vessels that feed the skin with its required oxygen. Nicotine patches, therefore, can NOT be used as an alternative to smoking.

The following procedures and accompanying complications that may result from the use of tobacco products are:

Facelifting operations: These operations include the midface- lower face- and neck lifting procedures. There can be actual skin loss of the face in front of and behind the ears.

Forehead Lifting: There can be hair loss, poor wound healing and scarring.

Blepharoplasty (Eyelid Surgery): There can be infection, loss of skin, poor wound healing, edema, and prolonged swelling.

Rhinoplasty (Nose Surgery): There can be infection, loss of skin, poor wound healing.

Breast Reduction, Mastopexy and Breast Augmentation operations: there can be delayed wound healing resulting in unsightly scarring and skin loss and potential nipple loss necessitating skin grafting. There can be infection around the implant requiring its removal. In all cases of patients exposed to smoke or directly smoking, wounds do not heal within the expected time frame. Wound healing can be prolonged, as long as 3-4 months.

Abdominoplasty (Tummy Tuck): Smoking or exposure to smoke will decrease the ability of the skin to heal properly resulting in unsightly scarring and higher risk for infection and more importantly, skin loss in the central abdomen, sometimes requiring a skin graft.

As your physician I am advising you, if you are smoking, using nicotine patches or gum or in contact with secondary smoke within three weeks of any surgical procedure, your surgery will be cancelled.

Slow wound healing (months instead of weeks), skin loss resulting in scabbing and prolonged need for dressing changes and infection usually involving the need for antibiotics (and sometimes another surgery to drain the infection) all are complications that can occur if you smoke, are exposed to secondary smoke, use nicotine patches or gum. Please be honest with us so we can take good care of you and help prevent problems.

I have read the above information and have been informed of the issues of primary and secondary smoke and nicotine effects on wound healing

PATIENT SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____