

Quitting and Weight Management

Congratulations on your decision to quit using tobacco!

You've taken an important step towards improving your health.

Weight gain occurs when you eat more calories than your body uses. For example, there are 3,500 calories in a pound. If a person eats 3,500 calories and does not burn any of these calories, he/she will gain a pound. If a person burns 3,500 calories more than is eaten, he/she will lose a pound.

Who gains weight, why, and what happens when you quit using tobacco?

The average person who quits tends to gain between 4 and 10 pounds. There are many reasons for this, including feeling hungrier, eating more because food tastes better, and snacking on or drinking more high-calorie foods. Some people even complain that they miss doing something with their hands and their mouth and wind up eating more often simply to take the physical place of the smoking habit. When you quit using tobacco, your metabolism slows down and over time returns to your normal level. This slower rate tends to burn fewer calories, which leads to weight gain. Even slight increases in your physical activity during the quitting process can help reduce or eliminate weight gain. Walking up steps instead of taking the elevator, or parking at the back of the lot instead of the front, can really make a difference.

Focus on quitting and getting healthy, rather than weight gain.

Make “not smoking” your number one goal. The best thing you can do for your health is to quit smoking or chewing tobacco. Decide to get fit and replace tobacco with exercise. After quitting tobacco, you'll find you're better equipped to stay active and exercise. If you gain a few pounds when you quit tobacco, don't dwell on it. Instead, feel proud that you are improving your health by ridding yourself of the 7,000 toxins found in tobacco.

Strategies to help you stay off tobacco will also help you maintain a healthy weight.

Retrain the way you think. When you feel the urge to use tobacco, shift your thoughts to looking and feeling better. Review your commitment to quit. Remind yourself that cravings and weight gain are temporary and will pass. Stay physically active. Research shows this may ease withdrawal symptoms (like cravings, depressed mood, and irritability) and improve your chances of staying tobacco-free.

Consider using medication.

Talk to your healthcare provider about medications—such as bupropion SR, nicotine gum or nicotine lozenge—to help you quit. Aside from curbing your habit, these medications have been shown to delay or limit weight gain after quitting. Combined with the proper coaching, they increase your chance of quitting for good.

How can I avoid weight gain after quitting smoking?

It is possible to stop smoking and not gain weight. Get the help and encouragement you need from people who support your efforts to quit. Talk to your healthcare provider about healthy eating or even join a support group. Remember that fad diets do not generally work. To reduce your cravings, try the following:

- Eat a balanced and varied diet that contains fruits and vegetables.
- Be sure to eat breakfast.
- Limit foods that are high in fats and avoid concentrated sweets.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Eat slowly and stop eating when you feel full.
- Increase your activity level to burn off calories more quickly.
- Consider using nicotine replacement therapy during your quit attempt. It may help you avoid weight gain.

How can exercise help?

Exercise can help because it burns calories and stimulates your metabolism, and when you burn more calories than you consume, your body uses the fat for energy. Exercise also helps control your appetite, making you want to eat less. Exercise decreases the urge for a cigarette and helps you deal with stress. Exercise even improves your mood, your skin and body tone, as well as increasing your strength.

Change your habits.

Keep your hands and mouth busy. Try toothpicks, straws, pencils, or low-calorie snacks like carrots, sugarless gum or pretzels. Keep busy with an activity you enjoy, like gardening, games or artwork. Drink plenty of liquids, especially water. Limit coffee, soft drinks and alcohol—they can increase your urge to use tobacco. Avoid using high-calorie drinks that can contribute to weight gain. Exercise regularly: Try walking or jogging in the morning instead of having a cigarette or dip. Join an exercise group. Use the stairs and park farther away from buildings. Get more sleep. Go to bed earlier. Read a book before sleeping instead of lighting up or chewing. Don't skip meals. Research shows your metabolism improves with regular meals. Eat slowly. Enjoy every bite. Try relaxation techniques. Breathe deeply. Stretch. Do yoga. Reward yourself every day or week that you don't use tobacco. Don't use food or drink as a reward. Consider getting professional help for weight control.

Where can I get help to quit smoking?

Talk to your healthcare provider to find out if you are eligible for medications or nicotine replacement products to help you quit. Call 1.800.QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669) for telephone counseling and information about quitting in your state.

Most importantly, don't give up! Keep trying.

Action Steps:

- Control your weight by burning more calories than you take in
- Eat a balanced diet to avoid cravings
- Drink plenty of water
- Contact a smoking cessation program to quit smoking and control your weight

This information was adapted from content originally created and published by the American Thoracic Society Tobacco Series
<http://patients.thoracic.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/ATS-Tobacco-Miniserie-Weight.pdf>

This information was adapted from content originally created and published by the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research & Intervention
<http://ctri.wisc.edu/News.Center/Fact%20Sheets/Updated%20ROS%20Handouts/15.Weight.pdf>