



Smoking and Weight Management

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 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.

Will I gain weight when I quit smoking?

When you quit smoking, you burn calories at a slower rate. Therefore, some people who quit smoking will gain weight because of this slow-down in their metabolism (the process that converts food into energy and controls the rate at which your body burns calories). Some people who quit smoking also increase their food consumption. Smokers who quit often use food to deal with feelings of boredom, stress, or as a reward for not smoking. Also, those who quit often complain that they miss doing something with their hands and their mouth. You might find yourself snacking and eating more often to take the place of smoking.

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 health care provider about healthy eating or 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 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. When you exercise and burn more calories than you consume, your body uses fat for energy. Exercise also helps control your appetite and makes you want to eat less. Exercise decreases the urge for a cigarette and helps you deal with stress. Exercise improves your mood, your skin and body tone, as well as increases your strength.

Where can I get help to quit smoking?

Talk to your health care provider to find out if you are eligible to use medications or nicotine replacement products to help you quit. To find a local cessation program, go to <http://www.quitnet.com/library/programs/> or 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

Authors: Tobacco Control Committee of the American Thoracic Society, Pat Folan RN, MS, Christine Fardellone RN, MS

Reviewer: Suzanne C Lareau RN, MS

References:

Mayo Clinic (2010) *Quit smoking, gain weight: Is it inevitable?*

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/quit-smoking/AN01437>

National Institutes of Health (NIH) Win-Publication (2010) *You can control your weight as you quit smoking.*

<http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/smoking.htm>