

Smoking Cessation and Weight Management -- How to Quit Smoking without Gaining Weight

Many smokers worry that they will gain weight after they stop smoking. In fact many people get trapped in the vicious cycle of quitting smoking, gaining weight, and returning to smoking. Granted, the average weight gain is between 6 and 8 pounds, but not everyone gains weight after quitting smoking. The key to breaking the cycle is to make smoking cessation **THE TOP PRIORITY!** Do what you can now to avoid weight gain and accept the fact that you still may gain a few pounds as a result of quitting. After a few months without nicotine, you will better be able to re-focus your efforts towards weight loss.

Follow these steps to keep the weight off and be smoke-free:

- 1. Make not smoking your #1 priority.** Don't let worries about weight block your path to a smoke free life. Weight can be lost, but lungs cannot.
- 2. Exercise regularly.** Exercise is a big help in both controlling weight and quitting smoking. It helps reduce tension and stress. After exercising, you feel more relaxed and alert. Consult your doctor and plan a program tailored to your age and physical condition. Start out slowly. Make it fun, and stick to it.
- 3. Monitor your weight.** Weigh yourself at least once a week, under the same conditions, in order to keep track of any changes in your weight.
- 4. Notice what you're eating.** Just as it's important in quitting smoking to learn when and why you smoke, it's important in controlling weight to know what foods you're eating, how much, when, and why. Think about what triggers your eating.
- 5. Eat slowly.** It takes at least 20 minutes for your brain to signal that your stomach is full. Give your body time to tell you it's satisfied.
- 5. Make a plan for healthy eating.** Include whole grains, lean protein, fruits and vegetables. Weight control does not involve dangerous diets, skipping meals, and eating food you don't like. It involves forming a healthy, balanced eating plan you can stick with. Making smart food choices is the secret to controlling your weight.
- 6. Snack smart.** Limit snacking by eating regular balanced meals. Keep nutritious snacks such as whole grains, low fat dairy, and fruits or raw vegetables on hand and drink lots of water.
- 7. Sweets and alcohol in moderation.** It's okay to have these on special occasions, but plan ahead to fit them into your daily allowance. Also, try substitutions such as fresh fruits to satisfy cravings for sweets. Drink iced tea or seltzer with a squeeze of lemon instead of a high-calorie alcoholic drink.
- 8. Be patient.** Making lifestyle changes takes time. Don't beat yourself up if you have a bad day or week. Just get back on track and take one day at a time.