

How Can I Avoid Weight Gain When I Stop Smoking?

Quitting smoking doesn't mean you'll automatically gain weight. And even if you do gain a few pounds, that's not as important as saving your life . . . and the lives of others.

When people gain weight, it's usually because they start to eat more once they quit smoking. If you watch what you eat and stay physically active, you may not gain at all!



What should I eat?

- Pick a variety of fruits and vegetables.
- Select whole-grain cereals, pastas and breads.
- Try unsalted or very lightly salted pretzels, air-popped popcorn or nuts for a snack. Watch your portions.
- Read nutrition facts labels and choose healthful foods low in sodium, saturated and trans fats and added sugars.
- Cut back on alcohol and drinks with added sugars like soft drinks, fruit drinks and sweetened tea.
- Drink lots of water!

How can physical activity help?

- It releases stress and calms you.
- It can help control your appetite.
- It helps keep your mind off smoking.
- It may help control cravings and the urge to smoke or use tobacco.
- It burns calories and can help you lose weight if you take in fewer calories than you use up.
- It can help you reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- It can improve your mood.

What are good activities to help keep weight off?

Becoming more active can help you reduce or maintain your weight. Try any of the following.

- Walk briskly in your neighborhood or at indoor shopping malls.
- Do gardening or yard work.
- Take the stairs instead of escalators and elevators.
- Park farther from stores and walk.
- Take a dance class.
- Start jogging.
- Ride a bicycle.

Sit less and move more. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (like brisk walking) or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or a combination of the two every week. Include moderate- to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity on at least two days a week for more health benefits.



How Can I Avoid Weight Gain When I Stop Smoking?

What can I do instead of smoking?

- Munch on carrots, apples and celery. Chew sugarless gum.
- Brush your teeth often to keep a fresh taste in your mouth.
- Keep your hands busy—wash the dishes, garden, knit, do crossword puzzles or cook.
- Try a new sport or exercise class.
- Get plenty of rest and physical activity.
- Play with a pencil, a squeezable stress ball or marbles.

What else can I do?

- Try relaxation techniques like deep breathing or meditation.
- Ask family and friends to support you in quitting.
- Write down why you're quitting. Reread your reasons often.
- Spend time with other nonsmokers.
- Go where there's no smoking, like stores, movies, churches and libraries.
- Reward yourself every day or week that you stay a nonsmoker. Don't use food as a reward. Treat yourself to a movie or activity with friends.



- Talk with your health care provider. Counseling, support groups and medications might help you stop smoking and stay a nonsmoker.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at heartinsight.org.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/supportnetwork.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care provider.

For example:

What healthy snacks should I keep on hand?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/answersbyheart to learn more.