



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?

- A variety of deeply colored fruits and vegetables, such as spinach, carrots, peaches and berries (at least 4-5 – servings of each a day).
- Fiber-rich whole-grain cereals, pastas and breads.
- Fat-free or low-fat snacks like pretzels, air-popped popcorn.
- Sugar-free hard candy.
- Read food labels and choose healthful foods low in sodium, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, and added sugars.
- Cut back on alcohol and drinks with added sugars (soft drinks, fruit drinks, fruit punch, and other beverages with added sugars).
- Drink lots of water!

How can physical activity help?

- Brisk walking and other aerobic exercise releases stress and calms you.
- It can help control your appetite.

- It burns calories and can help you lose weight if you take in fewer calories than you use up.
- It can help you stay at 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. Check with your doctor first if you've been inactive a long time or have medical problems, you're middle-aged or older, and you plan a vigorous exercise program.

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

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- Try aerobic dance classes or use a videotape at home. Aim for 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) a week of moderate-intensity, or 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity or an equivalent combination of the two.

What can I do instead of smoking?

- Munch on carrots, apples, celery and sugarless gum.
- Brush your teeth often and keep a fresh taste in your mouth.
- Keep your hands busy — wash the car, garden, knit, do crossword puzzles, write letters, or cook.
- Try a new sport.
- Get plenty of rest and physical activity. Play with a pencil, paper clip or marbles.

What else can I do?

- Try relaxation techniques like deep breathing or meditation.
- Think positive thoughts! Feel proud about quitting.
- Write down why you're quitting and read it.



- 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.
- Talk to your doctor to decide if medications and/or support or counseling groups might help you keep your non-smoker status.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals.** If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
- 2 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease.
- 3** For information on stroke, call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at StrokeAssociation.org.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

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

For example:

How do I read food labels?

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.

Knowledge is power, so Learn and Live!

