

STOPPING SMOKING & WEIGHT CONTROL

Will I Gain Weight When I Stop Smoking?

On average, 70-80% of people who stop smoking initially gain between 5 and 7 pounds. Most weight gain occurs in the first few weeks after stopping smoking. There is evidence that suggests that people who gain a few pounds reduce their likelihood to return to smoking. Many people actually lose weight when they stop smoking. You may feel more energetic, especially if you exercise during the stop smoking process.

Why Do People Gain Weight After Stopping Smoking?

Nicotine is a stimulant that affects the body's metabolic rate. When a person stops smoking their metabolic rate slows. If caloric intake and/or activity level is not altered, some weight gain is likely after stopping. Also, the craving for a cigarette is often confused with a hunger pang. Many ex-smokers find themselves eating more to satisfy the craving for a cigarette. Heavy smokers (>25 cigs/day) are more likely to gain weight after stopping, probably the result of their greater dependence on nicotine.

Cigarettes have been found to affect a person's sense of having eaten enough. Therefore, the person who stops smoking may have trouble knowing when to stop eating after a meal, or may feel hungry soon after eating.

Isn't Being Overweight As Dangerous As Smoking?

Smoking is far more dangerous than a few extra pounds of weight! To be at the same risk of early death associated with smoking one pack of cigarettes a day, a person needs to be 100 pounds above their ideal weight.

How Can I Control My Weight After I Stop Smoking?

- ◆ Avoid refined sugar. The body does crave sugars during withdrawal from cigarettes.
 - Fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods will release sugars into the system more gradually, preventing the highs and lows in blood sugar that result from eating high sugar foods.
- ◆ Eat small well-balanced meals, dispersed throughout the day.
- ◆ Have enjoyable low calorie snacks available.
- ◆ Get up from the table after a meal.
- ◆ Drink water. This has multiple benefits.
- ◆ Be aware of the fat and calorie content of the foods you choose; be conscientious of your food intake.
- ◆ Be more active, which can include simple changes, such as using stairs, parking further from your destination, and walking for a few minutes after a meal. This also has benefits beyond weight control:
 - it is a good distraction
 - it promotes faster detoxification from nicotine and better sleep
 - you will notice benefits that come from stopping smoking sooner
 - it can be part of an overall lifestyle change that will help you stay smoke free

