

Controlling Weight Gain **While Quitting** **Smoking**



A strong personal resolve to kick the habit is a primary factor in quitting smoking successfully. Many people gain weight when they stop smoking, and, for that reason, they may start again. However, a normal, healthy person would have to gain close to a hundred pounds in order to equal the health risks they take with smoking. Also, it is not a given that everyone who quits smoking gains weight. Regardless, you can strategize to fend off unwanted pounds.

Why Do Some People Gain Weight When They Quit Smoking?

Nicotine suppresses the appetite and causes the liver to release glycogen, which raises the blood sugar level slightly. With nicotine out of your system, you may feel hungry more often. Smoking artificially elevates heart rate and increases metabolism. When you stop smoking, your

body has to readjust to a lower metabolic rate.

If you eat the same as you did when you were smoking, your body will end up using less and storing more (as fat) of the food. Smoking dulls the taste buds. Food begins to taste better to new nonsmokers; this can increase food intake. And then there's oral fixation, some ex-smokers may want something to fill the void of cigarettes.

Use common sense to maintain your weight while quitting smoking. Obviously, if you substitute a candy bar each time you crave a cigarette, you will gain weight. Eating a well-balanced, low-calorie diet with three meals a day, and increasing your activity level, will probably prove effective in maintaining your weight.

If you think this won't be enough, figure out your current average daily caloric intake and use this as a guideline for weight maintenance after you quit. Plan meals and shop ahead at first. Stock your kitchen and office with healthy, low-calorie snack foods, such as carrot and celery sticks, air-popped popcorn, dry cereals, or crackers.

Try to view snack foods,

aids to getting beyond the craving to smoke. Other things that you can use to put in your mouth include toothpicks, plastic straws, gum, and hard candy.

Think about when you normally smoke and decide what you'll do instead. For instance, if you always have a cigarette with your coffee, plan to have something else on hand. If you find that the nonsmoking causes you to want to eat more at meals, drink a glass of water before and during the meal. Chew your food well, eat slowly, and concentrate on how much better food tastes now. After a meal is a great time for a cigarette, right? Well, then get up and moving right away; wash the dishes, go for a walk, brush your teeth, redirect the urge to smoke by doing something active.

Nicotine addiction can be monumentally difficult to overcome. Whatever your reasons for wanting to quit, know that there are many sources of assistance. To start, local schools or your office may have smoking cessation groups and/or integrated practices, such as hypnosis. You may also try contacting your EAP for further resources to assist you in achieving your goal.

The American Cancer Society has lots of good information and helpful pamphlets for people who wish to quit smoking, and they will be happy to answer your questions and send you this information. Their number is (800)-ACS-2345 / -227-2345. The American Lung Association also has an excellent program and very good materials. They can be reached at (800) 586-4872 or (212) 315-8700. There's also the National Cancer Institute at (800)-4-CANCER / -422-6237.

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Tips For A Good Night's

Sleep

Getting a good night's sleep can be easier than you think, if you just keep in mind some of these helpful tips. Remember, sleep is supposed to be relaxing and helps to renew your body every night. Do not make sleep a competition or skimp for too long (longer than a few days) on getting a good night's sleep of at least 8 hours per day. Everybody has trouble sleeping from time to time, so don't worry if you're having a stretch of having trouble sleeping. Try these tips to help return to a restful, natural sleep.

Set a schedule and keep a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed at a set time each night

and get up at the same time each morning. Disrupting this schedule may lead to insomnia. "Sleeping in" on weekends also makes it harder to wake up early on Monday morning because it resets your sleep cycles for a later awakening. Do not nap within 8 hours of bedtime.

Exercise. Try to exercise 20 to 30 minutes a day. Daily exercise often helps people sleep, although a workout soon before bedtime may interfere with sleep. For maximum benefit, try to get your exercise about 5 to 6 hours before going to bed. Do not exercise within two hours of bedtime.

Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol. Avoid drinks that contain caffeine, which acts as a stimulant and keeps people awake. Sources of caffeine include coffee, chocolate, soft drinks, non-herbal teas, diet drugs, and some pain relievers. Smokers tend to sleep very lightly and often wake up in the early morning due to nicotine withdrawal. Alcohol robs people of deep sleep and REM sleep and keeps them in the lighter stages of sleep. Avoid all of these things at least 6 to 8 hours before sleeping. Also, try to avoid eating any kind of large meal within two hours of bedtime.

Have a relaxing bedtime ritual. A warm bath, reading, or

another relaxing routine can make it easier to fall asleep. You can train yourself to associate certain restful activities with sleep and make them part of your bedtime ritual.

Sleep until sunlight.

If possible, wake up with the sun, or use very bright lights in the morning. Sunlight helps the body's internal biological clock reset itself each day. Sleep experts recommend exposure to an hour of morning sunlight for people having problems falling asleep.

Don't lie in bed awake.

If you can't get to sleep, don't just lie in bed. Do something else, like reading, watching television, or listening to music, until you feel tired. The anxiety of being unable to fall asleep can actually contribute to insomnia. Return to bed when you begin feeling sleepy, and try to avoid sleeping in locations other than your bed.

Control your room environment and temperature.

Extreme temperatures may disrupt sleep. Try to avoid going to sleep with the television or radio on, because it can lead to the need to have the TV or radio on every time you try and sleep.

See a doctor if your sleeping problem continues. Most sleep disorders can be treated effectively.

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