



QUITLINE IOWA

1 800 QUIT NOW | 1 800 784 8669

Weight Control While Quitting

Congratulations on your decision to quit smoking! Quitting is one of the best actions you can take to improve your health. You may be concerned about gaining weight, but try not to worry about it as you quit. Focus on stopping smoking first, and then continue to improve your health by reaching and maintaining a healthy weight for life.

Will I gain weight if I stop smoking?

Not everyone gains weight when they stop smoking. Among people who do, the average weight gain is between 6 and 8 pounds. Roughly 10 percent of people who stop smoking gain a large amount of weight—30 pounds or more.

What causes weight gain after quitting?

When smokers quit, they may gain weight for a number of reasons. These include:

- Feeling hungry. Quitting smoking may make a person feel hungrier and eat more than usual, but this feeling usually goes away after several weeks.

- Having more snacks and alcoholic drinks. Some people eat more high-fat, high-sugar snacks and drink more alcoholic beverages after they quit smoking.

- Burning calories at a normal rate again. Every cigarette you smoke makes your body burn calories faster, but is also harmful to your heart. Once you quit, you are burning fewer calories on a daily basis.



Can I avoid weight gain?

Physical activity and a healthy eating plan may help you control your weight. In addition, being physically active may ease withdrawal symptoms during smoking cessation and help

reduce the chances of relapsing after quitting. While it is a good idea to be physically active and eat healthy foods as you quit smoking, try not to worry about your weight. It may be easier to quit first and focus on controlling your weight when you are smoke-free.

To lower your chances of gaining weight when you stop smoking:

1. Accept yourself.
2. Get regular, moderate-intensity physical activity.
3. Limit snacking and alcohol.
4. Consider using medication to help you quit.

1. Accept yourself.

If you gain a few pounds when you quit, do not dwell on it. Instead, feel proud that you are improving your health. Quitting smoking may make you feel better in many ways"

- More energy
- Whiter teeth
- Fresher breath and fresher smelling clothes and hair
- Fewer wrinkles and healthier-looking skin
- A clearer voice

2. Get regular, moderate-intensity physical activity.

Regular physical activity may help you avoid large weight gains when you quit smoking. It may also boost your mood and help you feel



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more energetic. It is likely that you will be able to breathe easier during physical activity after you quit smoking.

Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most days of the week, preferably every day. You can accomplish this by breaking it up into shorter sessions—it does not need to be done all at once. After you quit smoking and are ready to lose weight, you may need to do more than 30 minutes of physical activity a day to achieve your weight loss goals. The ideas below may help you be active.

- Use your lunch break to walk around and stretch, or take a walk after dinner.
- Sign up for a class such as dance or yoga. Ask a friend to join you.
- Get off the bus one stop early if you are in an area safe for walking.
- Park the car further away from entrances to stores, movie theaters, or your home.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.



3. Limit snacking and alcohol.

Having more high-fat, high-sugar snacks and alcoholic drinks may lead to weight gain when you quit smoking. The ideas below may help you make healthy eating and beverage choices as you quit smoking.

Tips for Healthy Eating and Beverage Selections as You Quit

- Do not go too long without eating. Being very hungry may lead to less healthy food choices.
- Eat enough at meals to satisfy you, but try not to overeat. Eat slowly so you can pick up on your body's signals that you are full.
- Choose healthy snacks, such as fresh fruit or canned fruit packed in juice (not syrup), air-popped popcorn, or low-fat yogurt when you are hungry between meals.
- Do not deny yourself an occasional treat. If you crave ice cream, enjoy a small serving, which is 1/2 cup.
- Choose an herbal tea, hot cocoa made with fat-free milk, or sparkling water instead of an alcoholic beverage.

4. Consider using medication to help you quit.

Talk to your health care provider about medications that may help you quit smoking. Some people gain less weight when they use medication.

Medications That May Help You Quit Smoking

- nicotine replacement therapy, including the patch, gum, nasal spray, lozenge, and inhaler

- antidepressant medication

The patch, gum, and lozenge are available without a prescription from your health care provider.

