

Butt Out!

Dealing with Challenges

Weight Gain

Many people are afraid they will gain weight when they quit smoking. **Here are some things to keep in mind as you continue on your journey to becoming smoke-free:**

- About 1/5 people who quit smoking do not gain *any* weight.
- On average, people gain 5-6 pounds after quitting smoking.
- The health benefits of quitting are far greater than those associated with gaining weight. Since smoking artificially reduces weight, the extra pounds represent a return to your normal, natural body weight.
- Do not assume your weight gain is because you quit smoking. Also, starting to smoke again will not help you take it off.
- Many non-smokers say it is easier to lose weight than to quit smoking. If you are successful at quitting, you have what it takes to lose weight!
- Weight gain can be controlled. If you are physically active before you quit, you are less likely to gain weight. Increasing your level of activity after quitting will also help prevent weight gain. If you find yourself choosing snacks as a substitute for having a cigarette, choose healthy ones (e.g., vegetables, fruit, and low fat cheese).

Two causes of weight gain after quitting:

- 1) Your body's metabolism slows down when you are smoke-free.
- 2) Many people use food to replace cigarettes and as a result end up eating more than before.

Tips to help you avoid gaining weight:

- **Try to eat the same amount as usual:** Food may taste better after you quit, so you may want bigger portions.
- **Drink lots of fluids:** Nicotine withdrawal can cause constipation. Drink lots of fluids, but cut back on caffeine (e.g., coffee, tea, cola) because they can also contribute to constipation.
- **Eat low fat snacks**
- **Eat healthy, tasty, well-balanced meals:** Use Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating and avoid fad diets.

Become more physically active

Benefits of Physical Activity

- ▶ Will improve your well-being and attitude toward life
- ▶ Helps your body recover faster from the negative effects of smoking
- ▶ Increases your energy levels

Some activities you could easily add to your daily routine:

- ▶ Walk the dog after dinner.
- ▶ Spend your coffee break outside, but, take an apple and go for a walk.
- ▶ Do some gentle stretches in the morning.
- ▶ At work, take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- ▶ Take up gardening in your back yard or on your balcony.

Managing Stress

Many people smoke because they believe it helps them to cope with stress. If this sounds like you, then you will need to learn how to handle stress without smoking.

Change the source of your stress

- Are you having a conflict with someone? Try talking about your differences. Find middle ground that you can both live with.
- Be assertive: let others know how you feel about their actions.
- Look for different ways of dealing with a stressful situation: the more you prepare, and the more options you line up for yourself, the lower your stress will be. Do not rely on a single coping strategy like smoking.

Change your response

- Don't give control of your emotions to someone else. Tell yourself there is no reason why someone else's behaviour should ruin your day.
- Attempt to change what a high stress situation means to you. If you have a big assignment coming up at work try to think of the big picture. Very rarely does your entire life or job depend on how well you do.

Try this: deep breathing

Instead of turning to a cigarette in a stressful situation, try this easy breathing technique:

- 1) Take a slow deep breath in through your nose to the slow count of 5.
- 2) Push your tummy out at the same time. This will help the air go deeply into your lungs.
- 3) Slowly breathe out through your mouth to the count of 7.
- 4) Repeat this 3X as you feel yourself relaxing and the stress dropping away.

Try this: tension releasing

You can do this wherever you are, whenever you feel the need.

- 1) Let go of the tension in your neck and shoulders.
- 2) Let go of the tension in your jaw.
- 3) Focus completely on your breathing, nothing else.
- 4) As you exhale, let your shoulders drop (relax) and let your body “sink” (into the chair or floor).
- 5) Repeat this until you feel relaxed and centred.

Remember: these breathing and relaxation techniques are *skills*. You have to *practice* them. Choose the one you like best and do it 4-5X a day for the next few weeks. When you become good at it, you will be able to relax quickly and completely. You will feel revived, refreshed, and ready to go, smoke-free.

Resource: “For smokers who don’t want to quit” – The Canadian Cancer Society, “Your Guide to a Smoke Free Future” – Canadian Council for Tobacco Control