Is it true that I will gain weight if I quit using tobacco?

Some people—but not all—do gain weight as they quit. However, this weight gain is usually limited to between 5 and 10 lbs. and some of this weight gain can be prevented.

### Cause of Weight Gain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause of Weight Gain</th>
<th>Is this preventable?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nicotine increases metabolism(^1) in a way that is harmful to health: it causes body tension, accelerates the heart rate, and increases blood pressure(^2). When you quit smoking, your metabolism returns to normal rates and your body returns to the weight it would have been had you never smoked.(^3)</td>
<td>No. However, weight gain is usually limited to 10 lbs. or less and can be delayed by using bupropion SR or NRT.  (^4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You might gain 3 to 5 pounds due to water retention during the first week after quitting.(^3)</td>
<td>No. But it will go away after a week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco use reduces the ability to smell, so food is naturally more appealing when you quit. Since food tastes better, some quitters eat more than they did as tobacco users.(^5)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco users develop a habit of frequently putting their hands to their mouth to smoke or chew. When they give up tobacco, some people continue this habit, substituting food for tobacco.(^5)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cravings for cigarettes or chew during nicotine withdrawal can be confused for hunger pangs.(^5)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Healthy Ways to Minimize Weight Gain

- **Become More Physically Active.** In addition to helping control weight, exercise may help relieve the stress and depression caused by purging nicotine from the body.\(^3\) Some studies have shown that increased physical activity actually improves quit rates in addition to reducing weight gain.\(^4\)
- **Gradually improve eating habits.** Strict dieting does not prevent weight gain in quitters and makes it harder to quit using tobacco.\(^4\)
- **Replace smoking with healthy activities.** Snack on fruit or sugarless gum to satisfy any sweet cravings. Replace the action of holding cigarettes with activities like doodling, working puzzles, knitting, twirling a straw, or holding a pen or pencil. Relieve tension by meditating, taking a walk, soaking in the tub, or taking deep breaths.\(^3\)
- **Drink plenty of fluids, especially water and juice.** Drinking lots of water both cleanses the body of nicotine, decreasing the duration and severity of withdrawal symptoms, and helps people feel full so they don't overeat.\(^6\) But avoid caffeinated beverages, which may make nicotine withdrawal worse.\(^3\)
- **Get enough sleep.** When you feel tired, you are more likely to crave tobacco and food.\(^3\)
- **Try not to panic about modest weight gain.** Some weight gain is the healthy result of returning to normal metabolism. The health risks of smoking are far greater than the risks of gaining 5 to 10 pounds.\(^4\) You would have to gain about 100 pounds after quitting to make your health risks as high as when you smoked.\(^3\)

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For help quitting, call the Utah Tobacco Quit Line at 1.800.QUIT_NOW (1.800.784.8669) or visit utahquitnet.com

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\(^5\) Utah Department of Health (UDOH) (1997). *Ending Nicotine Dependence (END).*