

Quitting and Weight Gain

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	Is this preventable?
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	No. However, weight gain is usually limited to 10 lbs. or less and can be delayed by using bupropion SR or NRT. ⁴
You might gain 3 to 5 pounds due to water retention during the first week after quitting.	No. But it will go away after a week.
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	Yes!
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	Yes!
Cravings for cigarettes or chew during nicotine withdrawal can be confused for hunger pangs.	Yes!

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. Some studies have shown that increased physical activity actually improves quit rates in addition to reducing weight gain.
- **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.

For help quitting, call the Utah Tobacco Quit Line at 1.888.567.TRUTH or visit utahquitnet.com

¹ Hofstetter A, Schutz Y, Jequier E, Wahren J. Increased 24-hour energy expenditure in cigarette smokers. *N Engl J Med.* 1986;314:79-82. <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/abstract/314/2/79> Accessed August 2006.

² NIDA Research Report - Nicotine Addiction: *NIH Publication No. 01-4342, Printed 1998, Reprinted 2001*. <http://www.nida.nih.gov/PDF/NicotineRR.pdf> Accessed August 2006.

³ Weight-control Information Network (WIN), National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), National Institutes of Health (NIH). Accessed August 2006. *You can Control your weight as you quit smoking.* <http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/smoking.htm>

⁴ Fiore, M.C., Bailey, W.C., Cohen, S.J., et al. (2000). *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence.* Clinical Practice Guideline. U.S. Department of Human Services, Public Health Service (PHS).

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

⁶ American Lung Association (ALA) (2001). *Hunger Helps: Tips for Changing your Behavior about Food.* Freedom from Smoking: Module 6 Weight Control. <http://www.lungusa.org/ffs/protected/handouts/handout49.doc>