

# Smoking and Weight

Are you concerned about gaining weight when you quit?  
Have you gained some weight after quitting smoking?

You are not alone.

4 out of every 5 people who stop smoking gain some weight. While the health benefits of quitting far exceed the problems of gaining weight many people do not like it if they put on a few extra pounds. Smoking does more harm to your health and to your looks. The stress on your heart of smoking one pack of cigarettes per day is equal approximately to being 90 pounds overweight.



## How much weight do people gain?

The average person who quits smoking gains between 4 and 10 pounds. The more cigarettes that a person smoked per day, the more weight he or she is likely to gain after quitting. Most weight tends to be gained in the first 6 months. After six months many people start to lose the weight they gained as they adjust to being an ex-smoker.

## Why do ex-smokers gain weight?

### Metabolism

The nicotine in cigarettes raises the “metabolic rate” of smokers, which increases the amount of calories used. This is a very unhealthy way to burn calories. When you quit smoking, your metabolic rate slows down. It can take a few weeks or even months for your metabolism to rise back to normal levels. Slower rate burns fewer calories.

### Changes in eating habits

It is normal for your appetite to increase after quitting smoking. When you quit your sense of taste and smell improve and return to normal which often increases your appetite.

Ex-smokers often report that they miss the feeling of having something to do with their mouth and hands. Eating and snacking is like the action of smoking. Keep your hands and mouth busy with objects like a toothpick or stress ball. You can chew on foods like vegetables or sugar free gum or mints.

### What can I do to reduce weight gain?

- Choose some favorite non-food rewards to help you in the early stages of quitting – a bubble bath, a favorite book, or start a new hobby.
- Have a plan for the high risk times when you used to smoke, like work breaks, talking on the phone or while watching TV in the evenings.
- Always shop on a full stomach.
- Exercise.
- Get lots of rest!

Adapted from "Forever Free - A guide to remaining smoke free

Source: Tobacco Research and Intervention Program at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute at the University of South Florida

