



## How Can I Avoid Weight Gain When I Stop Smoking?

Quitting smoking doesn't mean you'll automatically gain weight. And even if you do gain a few pounds, that's not as important as saving your life...and the lives of others. When people gain weight, it's usually because they start to eat more once they quit smoking. If you watch what you eat and stay physically active, you may not gain at all!



### What should I eat?

- Pick a variety of fruits and vegetables.
- Select whole-grain cereals, pastas and breads.
- Fat-free or low-fat snacks like pretzels, air-popped popcorn.
- Try unsalted pretzels, air popped popcorn, or unsalted nuts for a snack.
- Read food labels and choose healthful foods low in sodium, saturated and *trans* fats, and added sugars.
- Cut back on alcohol and drinks with added sugars (soft drinks, fruit drinks, fruit punch, and other drinks with added sugars).
- Drink lots of water!

### How can physical activity help?

- It releases stress and calms you.
- It can help control your appetite.
- It helps keep your mind off cigarettes.
- It may help control cravings and the urge to smoke.
- It burns calories and can help you lose weight if you

take in fewer calories than you use up.

- It can help you reach and maintain healthy weight.
- It can improve your mood.

### What are good activities to help keep weight off?

Becoming more active can help you reduce or maintain your weight. Try any of the following.

- Walking briskly in your neighborhood or at indoor shopping malls.
- Do gardening or yard work.
- Take stairs instead of escalators and elevators.
- Park farther from stores and walk.
- Learn a new dance.
- Start jogging
- Ride a bicycle.
- Try aerobic dance classes or use a DVD at home.

Aim for at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity (like brisk walking). Or, you can do 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity

(continued)



aerobic physical activity, or a combination of the two, every week. And, include muscle-strengthening activities at least two days per week.

### What can I do instead of smoking?

- Munch on carrots, apples, celery and sugarless gum.
- Brush your teeth often and keep a fresh taste in your mouth.
- Keep your hands busy — wash the car, garden, knit, do crossword puzzles, write letters, or cook.
- Try a new sport.
- Get plenty of rest and physical activity.
- Play with a pencil, paper clip or marbles.

### What else can I do?

- Try relaxation techniques like deep breathing or meditation.
- Think positive thoughts! Feel proud about quitting.
- Write down why you're quitting and read it.
- Spend time with other nonsmokers.
- Go where there's no smoking, like stores, movies,



churches and libraries.

- Reward yourself every day or week that you stay a nonsmoker. Don't use food as a reward. Treat yourself to a movie.
- Talk to your healthcare provider. Counseling, support groups, and sometimes medications might help you stop smoking and stay a non-smoker.

## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

## Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

**What heart-healthy, low-calorie snacks should I keep on hand?**

## My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.