



Celebrating Cessation

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Tobacco Cessation Program

Iowa/Nebraska Primary Care Association

Quit Smoking Without Gaining Weight: How to keep off the pounds when you give up cigarettes.

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As a nutritionist in private practice, I've met with many women who complain that the decision to quit smoking caused them to gain unwanted pounds. Typically, it's not a huge amount of weight gain—it's maybe 5 or 10 pounds. But the frustration is obvious and understandable: they feel they've replaced one negative habit with another—excessive consumption of calories.

The cause of hunger and weight gain after quitting smoking is related to a few different factors. For one, the nicotine in tobacco can slightly raise metabolism, enabling you to burn more calories than you typically would on a daily basis. When you kick the habit, you experience a slight decline in metabolism, which increases your susceptibility to weight gain. Another theory suggests that when you quit smoking, levels of serotonin—the neurotransmitter responsible for calm, relaxed feelings—are low, and this can lead to irritability and carbohydrate cravings. Consuming sweet and starchy foods increases serotonin levels and enables you to feel more at ease.

Aside from these biological factors, your smoking habit probably consumed some amount of time during your day. Whether it was during a work break, or once you got home, taking time out for a cigarette was probably a regular part of your routine. As a result, it's not uncommon to find other activities to occupy the time you previously spent smoking. I'm talking about walking to the nearest vending machine and treating yourself to M&Ms or a Snickers, or heading down to the company cafeteria to grab a bag of chips.

Rest assured, by quitting smoking, you've made a smart decision that will improve your overall health and physical fitness. I understand that watching the scale go up is not exactly what you would call a reward for your behavior, though. To help you avoid packing on pounds after you've kicked the habit, follow my suggestions below:

- Plan activities for times when you have the urge to grab a cigarette. Go for a coffee break, call a friend, take a walk, or do some errands.
- Keep your hands busy at all times. This is key for the evening hours. Take up knitting, catch up on e-mails, or indulge your nails: give yourself a manicure or plan for a daily polish change.
- Carry a water bottle with you whenever you can. This will occupy your hands, and sipping calorie-free water throughout the day will help you avoid weight gain.
- Bring healthy snacks with you, in portion controlled Ziploc bags. Dried fruit and nuts, string cheese, and low-calorie energy bars are good choices.
- Keep sugarless gum, mints, or a travel-size mouthwash in your pocketbook. It's great for cleansing your palate when you're craving sweets. At night, brush your teeth right after dinner.
- Get moving! If you haven't been exercising, now is a good time to start. Exercise will minimize your hunger, boost your metabolism, help you burn calories, and improve your mood.

February is **American Heart Month**

A common lung condition – COPD or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease – can reduce the heart's ability to pump blood even with mild or no symptoms of COPD. Graham Barr of Columbia University Medical Center in New York City discovered this health concern in heart and lung data on more than 2,800 people. COPD affects the lungs' ability to take in oxygen. The study indicates COPD strains the heart more than people realize. According to Graham Barr, "previously, we thought this was a problem in people with very severe lung disease. This study suggests similar relationships or effects occur in much milder lung disease." One way to reduce the risk of COPD is to **not smoke**.

The study in the January 2010 New England Journal of Medicine was supported by the National Institutes of Health. Learn more at hhs.gov.

Smoking and Coronary Health Disease

Smokers' risk of developing coronary heart disease is 2–4 times that of nonsmokers. Cigarette smoking is a powerful independent risk factor for sudden cardiac death in patients with coronary heart disease; smokers have about twice the risk of nonsmokers. Cigarette smoking also acts with other risk factors to greatly increase the risk for coronary heart disease. People who smoke cigars or pipes seem to have a higher risk of death from coronary heart disease (and possibly stroke) but their risk isn't as great as cigarette smokers'. Exposure to other people's smoke increases the risk of heart disease even for nonsmokers.

**Courtesy of the American Heart Association*



**Celebrate Good Times!! Other highlights for the month of February:
Black History Month, National Cancer Prevention Month, Valentine's Day, Super Bowl Sunday, and the 2010 Winter Olympics**

Questions or Comments?

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