UNC PHYSICIANS NETWORK
UNC HEALTH CARE
CAROLINA ADVANCED HEALTH

Weight Management After Quitting

Congratulations on your decision to quit using tobacco! You've taken an important step toward improving your health. You might be concerned about gaining weight. The amount of weight you will likely gain from quitting will be a minor health risk compared to the many risks of continued tobacco use.

Who gains weight, why, and what happens when you quit using tobacco?

- The average person who quits gains between 4 and 10 pounds. There are many reasons for this, including feeling hungry, eating more because food now tastes better, and snacking and drinking more often on high-calorie foods.
- Changes in your body's metabolism. When you quit using tobacco, your metabolism slows down and over time returns to your normal level. This slower rate tends to burn fewer calories. Even slight increases in your physical activity when quitting can help reduce weight gain. Walking up steps instead of taking the elevator, or parking at the back of the lot instead of the front, can make a difference.

Focus on quitting and getting healthy, rather than weight gain.

- Make "not smoking" your number one goal.
- It is usually easier to quit first and then focus on controlling your weight when you are tobacco-free.

Strategies to help you stay quit will also help you maintain a healthy weight.

- Focus on retraining the way you think. Review your commitment to quit. Remind yourself that cravings and weight gain are temporary and will pass. Use deliberate, immediate refocusing of thinking toward other thoughts (like looking and feeling better) when cued by thoughts about tobacco use.
- Feeling an urge to put something (other than a cigarette or tobacco) in your mouth can be achieved with non-tobacco substitutes (eg, sugarless gum or candy, straws, toothpicks, bottled water, or nicotine replacement therapy).
- Being physically active might ease withdrawal symptoms (eg, cravings, depressed mood, and irritability) while you are quitting and help reduce your chances of smoking again.

Consider using medication

- Talk to your healthcare provider about medications, such as bupropion SR or the nicotine gum or lozenge, to help you quit. These medications might delay or limit weight gain after quitting. These medications, used alone or combined with the proper coaching, increase your chances of quitting for good.

Change your habits

- Keep your hands and your mouth busy. Try low-calorie foods for snacking—carrots, fruits, sugarless gum, or pretzel sticks. Don't skip meals. Eat slowly. When you eat out, eat wisely. Keep your hands busy by playing with a pencil, holding a book, writing, or working in a garden.
- Drink plenty of liquids, especially water. Limit coffee, soft drinks, and alcohol—they can increase your urge to use tobacco. Also avoid high-calorie drinks that can contribute to weight gain.
- Exercise regularly and moderately. Regular exercise helps. Try walking or jogging in the morning instead of having a cigarette or dip. Joining an exercise group provides a new routine. Use the stairs and park further from stores/school/work.
- Get more sleep. Go to sleep earlier. Take naps. Read a book before bed instead of lighting up or chewing.
- Try relaxation techniques like deep breathing or yoga.
- Reward yourself every day or week that you stay quit, but don't use food as a reward.
- Consider getting professional help for weight control.

Source: http://www.ceasesmoking2day.com/index.php/patient-oriented-materials

Carolina Advanced Health has a program to help you quit. Our care manager and pharmacist work together with each patient to find the treatments that will help each individual quit and stay tobacco free. Ask for an appointment to meet with our care manager to learn more.