

Quitting Smoking? Nutrition Tips



Quitting smoking is an excellent step toward adopting a healthy lifestyle. It will help reduce your risk of developing heart and lung disease as well as some cancers!

If I quit smoking, will I gain weight?

About 1 in 5 people who quit smoking do not gain any weight. For those who do gain weight, the average is about 5 to 7 pounds. After you stop smoking, you may gain weight for a number of reasons. Most people gain weight as they get older. You may be tempted to eat more because your food will smell and taste better. You may eat as substitute for keeping your hands or mouth busy. Nonetheless, the health benefits of quitting are far better than those associated with gaining a few extra pounds. Here are some strategies to help maintain a healthy weight when you quit smoking.

1. Eat a variety of healthy foods

Load up on veggies and fruits:

- Enjoy fruits and vegetables at every meal and snack.
- Fill up half of your plate with veggies and have a piece of fruit for dessert.
- Choose fruits and veggies more often than juice.

Increase your fibre to help you feel full:

- Choose yogurts, milk, and milk alternatives with less than 2% MF (milk fat).
- Try cheeses with less than 20% MF.
- Remove skin from poultry and cut off any excess fat from meat before cooking.
- Bake, barbeque, braise, broil, and grill instead of frying.

Listen to your body:

- Eat when you are hungry and stop when you are full. Your body will cue you to eat at least every 4 to 6 hours.
- When you skip meals, your body doesn't burn calories as fast and you will store fat more easily.
- When your body is in starvation mode, you will reach for foods that are high in fat, sugar, and salt.

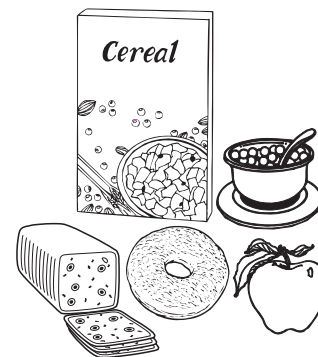


Watch the Portion Size:

- Serve meals and snack foods on smaller plates and bowls.
- Bring home half of your restaurant serving for another meal.
- Choose the smallest portion size at fast food outlets, movie theatres, ice cream parlors, etc.

Select Smart Snacks:

- Choose whole-grain crackers and low-fat cheese, plain popcorn sprinkled with parmesan cheese, diced fruit in yogurt, veggies with bean dip, celery and peanut butter, as these snacks are loaded with nutrients.
- Watch out for those sources of empty calories like cookies, candies, doughnuts, muffins, French fries, and potato chips just to name a few.



Drink lots of fluids:

- Satisfy your thirst with water. Carry some with you to sip on frequently.
- Limit sugary hot and cold beverages like fruit drinks, punches, soft drinks, iced teas, sports drinks, and energy drinks.

2. Enjoy daily physical activity

Enjoy daily physical activity to maintain a healthy weight, increase your energy, and feel good about yourself while you quit smoking. Aim for 60 minutes of physical activity each day.

- Walk whenever you can to work, to a friend's house, to the grocery store.
- Walk, bike, or blade instead of taking the car for shorter trips.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.
- Do an extra lap of the mall before shopping.
- Take a few minutes to stretch and bend while at work and during commercials.
- Go for walks around the neighborhood with your friends and family.
- Join a fitness class at a local recreation centre.
- Play a sport you enjoy such as basketball, tennis, hockey, or volleyball.

References

- Canadian Cancer Society. For Smokers Who Want To Quit, October 2002.
- Health Canada. Smoking helps me control my weight, October 2005; On the Road to Quitting Guide to Becoming a Non-Smoker, May 2005; Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide, February 2007.
- KFL&A Public Health. Tips to quit smoking without gaining weight.