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# Staying Free: How To Manage Your Weight After You Quit Smoking

**H**ave you noticed that your clothes have gotten a little tighter since you stopped smoking? You are not alone. Two out of every three quitters put on a few pounds after they give up cigarettes. Fortunately, there are plenty of small steps you can take that can enable you to get rid of those extra pounds for good.

## The Link Between Smoking And Weight

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Scientists know that there is a link between smoking and metabolism. Actually, the nicotine and thousands of other chemicals in cigarettes are poisons. Your body spends energy trying to make the poisons harmless, get rid of them, and deal with the harm they cause. So, the lighter weight you may have had when you smoked was actually a sign of poisoning.

Smoking also affects your appetite and the taste and smell of food. When you quit, you may find that you are hungrier and that food seems more appealing. Even with the physical changes that take place once you quit, the majority of weight gain is caused by eating more.

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# How To Get Rid Of The Extra Pounds – Or Prevent Them In The First Place

Like anyone else who wants to lose weight, ex-smokers can make use of two basic approaches:

- Add more physical activity to your day.
- Make small improvements in your eating habits that add up to less fat on your body.

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## Put Some Bounce Into Your Day

Extra physical activity helps you burn up more calories. It can also help you work off some of the stress you may feel as you withdraw from nicotine.

If you already have a regular exercise routine, good for you! All you may need to do is add a little more time or make your exercise a bit more vigorous than before. For example, if you walk, add one more day a week or five more minutes a day, or pump your arms faster, or walk up more hills.

If you would like to start a regular exercise routine, super! First, check with your doctor to see if you need a checkup. Then, think back to the kinds of activity you have enjoyed in the past. Think back on your childhood. Did you ride a bike? Love to run around? Swim? Roller-skate? If you liked it then, you'll probably still enjoy it today. Choose an activity to try. Begin slowly, with short periods of activity. If you need to, start by just sitting on the bike, standing in the roller skates, or taking two steps past the end of the driveway when you get the mail. Then gradually, minute-by-minute if you like, add activity time. Start with something you can stick with and do most days of the week—even if it's only one minute a day at first. Then gradually build up.

Another way to add activity is to build it into your ordinary pattern. When you need to go upstairs, take the stairs instead of the elevator. Find excuses to go upstairs! Park the car in a spot that's a little farther away than usual. Whenever you walk, walk a little faster. If you sit all day, stand up and stretch out from time to time. Every little bit truly helps. Research has shown that even people who fidget a lot weigh less because of their fidgeting!

Take a minute now to note how you could add a little extra activity to your life:

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# The Other Side Of The Coin: Your Eating Habits

If you are like most new ex-smokers, food has become more appealing to you. This is a sign of good health. It shows that your senses of smell and taste are improving because you stopped smoking. You may also be eating just to have something to put in your mouth instead of a cigarette. Under these circumstances, it's natural to gain a little weight.

As a first step in managing your eating patterns, pay attention to exactly what you're eating now. You can discover a lot about your eating habits by following these two simple steps.

**Step 1:** For three days, write down everything you eat and drink. Use the "Eating Pattern" sheet to record your foods and beverages and the approximate amounts.

## My Eating Pattern

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	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Breakfast			
Snack(s)			
Lunch			
Snack(s)			
Dinner			
Snack(s)			
During the night			

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**Step 2:** As you go through the three days, look at the kinds and amounts of foods you consumed. Does anything jump out at you? For example:

- Are there any foods on your chart that you ate but didn't really want?
- Are there any times when you ate more than you wanted or needed, just because "it was there?"
- Did you eat any foods because of emotions rather than hunger?
- Were there times when you ate a high-calorie food when a lower-calorie food would have been just as satisfying?
- Did you eat just to please someone else?
- Did you drink alcohol?
- Did you eat or drink without even being aware of it?
- Did you eat or drink a particular food or beverage out of habit?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you have found an area where you could take in fewer calories without any sense of sacrifice or deprivation.

Note any such areas of your own here:

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# Some Common Patterns And What To Do About Them

Many people find that they have room for improvement in the following areas. Take a look at your eating chart. If any of these patterns are also true for you, give the solutions a try.

**Improvement Area 1:** Eating most of your calories in the evening or before bedtime.

This eating habit can cause your calories to be stored as fat, since you are not moving around to burn up the calories.

**Solution:**

Eat most of your calories when you will be most active. Eat a larger breakfast and lunch and a smaller dinner. Limit bedtime snacking to the minimum amount needed (if any) for hunger.

**Improvement Area 2:** Eating a lot of sweets, chips or other high-fat, high-calorie foods.

This is a common pitfall. Feelings of anxiety, sadness, boredom, excitement, and anger may sometimes play a part in these choices.

**Solutions:**

Limit the amount of sweets and other high-calorie foods you consume each day.

- Fill up on healthier foods before you start eating sweets, chips, etc. That way you'll probably eat less of them.
- Control portions by taking a small amount onto your plate or dish and putting the rest of the package away. Savor every bite slowly!
- If you still find it hard to control portions, you may want to refrain from buying this type of snack food at all.
- Try reduced-fat, reduced-calorie versions of your favorite snacks.
- Have plenty of healthy, low-calorie snacks available, such as your favorite fruits and fruit juices, pretzels, sugarless candy and gum, etc.
- If you are eating in response to feelings, you may want to learn new ways to manage them. Physical activity, yoga, talking with a friend, positive thinking, constructive problem-solving, and mental imagery are some ways you can manage your feelings without eating.

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**Improvement Area 3: *Eating Frequently***

This habit doesn't always lead to weight gain, but it can if you are eating high-calorie foods frequently.

***Solutions:***

- If you are a nibbler, make sure you have lower-calorie nutritious snacks to eat.
- If you crave "junk food," make sure that you are getting sufficient nutritious food at meals so you will not be tempted to satisfy your hunger pangs with high-calorie snacks.
- Try thinking of your snacks as a "meal" that you break up into portions.
- Plan six small meals a day to fit within your calorie limit. Use nutritious, planned foods to replace the junk food.

## How Could You Make Some Improvement In Your Eating Habits?

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In the space below, write any eating patterns you think may be contributing to weight gain, and how you might improve these patterns.

**Eating Pattern That Might Lead to Weight Gain**

**How I Might Improve This Pattern**

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# One Day At A Time

For most people, getting really good at something new requires practice, practice, and more practice. Take managing your weight, for example. You may have never felt the need to watch your weight until now. This could be a new experience for you. Remember, you developed your eating habits over a long period of time.

Instead of looking at weight control as an all-or-nothing matter, approach it on a day-by-day basis. Each day, try one small step that interrupts an eating pattern that might lead to weight gain. And, do a little more physical activity, even if it's only one extra minute. This is easier than thinking about how you will manage your weight for the rest of your life.

Choose one step you'll take this coming week. Write your goal for the week here:

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Remember that the best solutions are often a product of trial and error. When you try something new and it works for you, keep at it. Tell others about your progress. What works for you may also work for someone else who has the same need. Share your recipes for success. Most important, give yourself lots of rewards and praise for doing a good job.

If you like, use the spaces below to keep a record of the solutions that work for you:

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