

Stop Smoking Service

Coping with Weight Gain

These clinical statements may help a patient prepare for and cope with weight gain after stopping smoking

“The great majority of smokers gain weight once they quit smoking. However, even without special attempts at dieting or exercise, weight gain is usually limited to less than 10 pounds.”

“There is evidence that smokers will gain weight once they quit smoking even if they do not eat more. Weight gain appears to be a natural part of quitting smoking.”

“The amount of weight that you may gain when you quit is a minor health risk compared to the risks of continued smoking.”

“Try to put your concerns about weight on the back burner. You are most likely to be successful if you first try to quit smoking and then later take steps to reduce your weight. Tackle one problem at a time! After you have quit smoking successfully we can talk about how to reduce your weight..”

“I know weight is important to you and that you don’t want to gain a lot of weight. However, temporarily – just until you are confident you have quit smoking for good – let’s focus on strategies to get you healthy rather than focussing on weight. Think about eating plenty of fruit and vegetables, getting regular exercise, getting enough sleep and not eating lots of fats. Right now, this is probably the best thing you can do for both your weight and your smoking. Eat plenty of healthy foods – don’t starve yourself!”

“While you may gain some weight after quitting smoking, compare the importance of this with the added years of healthy living you will gain, your better appearance (less wrinkled skin, whiter teeth) fresher breath and good feelings about quitting.

From the “Smoking Cessation Clinical Practice Guideline Panel and Staff (1996). The Agency for Health Care Policy and Research Smoking Cessation Clinical Practice Guideline JAMA, 275, 16, 1270-1280.