



## Let's Talk About...

### Weight Gain and Tobacco Use

Stopping or cutting back on tobacco use can be hard. For some people, the fear of gaining weight makes it even harder.

#### Will I gain weight if I stop using tobacco?

Most people who stop using tobacco gain some weight. There are many reasons for this:

- Nicotine (the addictive drug in tobacco) can stop us from feeling hungry.
- Nicotine is a stimulant. It makes the heart and other body systems work faster.
- When people stop using tobacco, taste buds recover and food starts to taste better.
- Eating may replace the habits around using tobacco (e.g., having a break at work, the hand-to-mouth action of smoking).
- As people stop using tobacco, their brains may crave foods with lots of sugar or fat.

Although people worry about gaining a lot of weight, most people gain less than 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms). Most of the weight gain happens in the first 1 to 2 months after quitting. Keep in mind that the health risks from smoking a pack a day are equal to health problems caused by carrying an extra 125 pounds (57 kilograms) of weight. Stopping your use of tobacco is an important part of getting healthy.

#### How can I manage my weight?

Here are some tips to manage your weight as you stop using tobacco:

- Have healthy snacks and food ready for times when you feel like eating.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Get active! Walking, running, yoga, and swimming are some activities that can help you manage your weight.
- Chew sugar-free gum.
- Find something to keep your hands busy (e.g., knitting, drawing, or a favourite hobby). Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about medicine that can help you deal with cravings.

If you're worried about gaining weight when you stop smoking, talk to your healthcare provider about a referral to a dietitian and/or fitness expert.

For more information and support, visit [albertaquits.ca](http://albertaquits.ca).