

Nutrition Tips for Ex-Smokers

Congratulations -- you've decided to quit smoking! You will probably be craving nicotine and feel hungry and restless. To help you overcome these challenges, try these nutrition tips. Good luck!

Satisfy the urge to munch with healthy choices...

Food will smell and taste better once you have stopped smoking, and you may be tempted to eat more to cope with nicotine cravings. That's fine, as long as you build most meals and snacks around healthy foods like whole grains, vegetables, fruits, lower fat dairy products, leaner meats and meat alternatives. Avoid skipping meals - when you're hungry, you may be more likely to crave nicotine and to overeat later in the day. Combine smaller helpings at breakfast, lunch and dinner with a variety of healthy lower fat snacks.

Drink lots of fluids, except for...

Drink six to eight glasses of water a day. Cold water helps to flush the nicotine out of your system and helps give your mouth something to do if you get the urge to smoke. Fruit juices, clear soups and low fat milk (skim or 1%) are healthy ways to add more fluid to your diet. Cut back on caffeine-containing beverages like regular coffee, tea and colas. Try switching to decaffeinated versions or mix your regular brew 50/50 with decaf. Alcohol may trigger a cigarette craving, especially if you used to drink and smoke at the same time.



Do you miss the feeling of having something in your mouth? Make up a "nutrition survival kit" to help keep your mouth busy. Keep a stock of crisp, crunchy or chewy items in your purse, at your desk, in the car and anywhere else you usually smoked.

Carrot sticks, celery sticks and other raw veggies in bite-size pieces

Oranges, melon slices, apples or other fresh fruit

Air-popped popcorn

Rice cakes

Bread sticks

Pretzels

Baked corn chips

Bagel halves

Sugar-free gum or mints

You and those extra pounds. Here's to your healthy weight as an ex-smoker...

You may put on a little weight when you quit smoking - the average ex-smoker gains about five or six pounds. Nicotine artificially raises your metabolism. When you cut cigarettes out of your life, your metabolism returns to normal and your body burns calories more slowly. Just remember that quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do for your health. In fact, you would have to gain eighty to a hundred pounds to offset the health benefits of quitting smoking! Healthy eating and being physically active can help the new tobacco-free you achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Walking, biking, gardening or other activities you enjoy can build muscle tissue. This helps keep your metabolism high so that you burn calories more quickly. Being active is a great stress-reliever too, and helps keep your mind off cigarettes.

The Dietitians of Canada website at www.dietitians.ca is a good source of nutrition information.