

Information on Smoking Cessation for the Clinician

Recommendations to Clinicians When Addressing Weight Gain

Clinician statements to help a patient prepare for and cope with post-cessation weight gain

The great majority of smokers gain weight once they quit smoking. However, even without special attempts at dieting or exercise, weight gain is usually 10 lbs. or less.

Some medications, including bupropion SR and nicotine replacement medicines, may delay weight gain.

There is evidence that smokers often gain weight once they quit smoking, even if they do not eat more. However, there are medications that will help you quit smoking and limit or delay weight gain. I can recommend one for you.

The amount of weight you will likely gain from quitting will be a minor health risk compared with the risks of continued smoking.

I know that you don't want to gain a lot of weight. However, let's focus on strategies to get you healthy rather than on weight. Think about eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, getting regular exercise, getting enough sleep, and avoiding high-calorie foods and beverages. Right now, this is probably the best thing you can do for both your weight and your health.

Although 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.

Role of Exercise in Weight Gain

Available research does not show that interventions to increase exercise reliably boost smoking abstinence rates. One recent study showed that an exercise program occurring in three 45-minute sessions per week increases long-term smoking abstinence in women and delays weight gain when it is combined with a cognitive-behavioral smoking cessation program. As was the case for weight loss interventions, there is no evidence that exercise interventions undermine success in stopping smoking.

Some evidence suggests that weight gain is reduced if smoking abstinence is accompanied by a moderate increase in physical activity. Vigorous exercise programs should not be implemented without consulting a physician.

Although it may be difficult to get smokers to adhere to a vigorous exercise program, smokers should be encouraged to engage in moderate exercise and physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Adapted from Fiore MC, Jaén CR, Baker TB, et al. *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence: 2008 Update*. Clinical Practice Guideline. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Public Health Service. May 2008.