Tobacco Use, Nutrition & Weight

what’s the link?

CAMH Nicotine Dependence Services Fact Sheets

Is tobacco use connected to vitamin/mineral deficiencies?

Smoking makes it harder for your body to absorb different vitamins and minerals that are important for your health.

- **Calcium** Bones, muscles, nerves
- **Vitamin A** Bones, skin, connective tissue
- **Vitamin C** Muscles, immune system
- **Vitamin D** Antioxidant
- **Vitamin E** Eyes, skin, lungs, intestine, urinary tract
- **Selenium** Reproduction, protection against infection and oxidative damage

*Canada’s Food Guide* is a good tool for helping you:

- Find out how much food you need
- Choose which types of food are better for you

Does using tobacco help control weight?

The effect of smoking on weight is complicated.

**Weight Loss**

- Suppresses appetite
- Affects sense of taste
- Increases metabolic rate

**Weight Gain**

- Accumulation of stomach fat
- Problems processing sugar
- Quit attempts lead to weight cycling
- Clustering of smoking with risk factors such as poor nutrition and inactivity

Smoking may lead to weight gain that offsets its “slimming effect”. People who smoke heavily often weigh more than those who smoke less.
Will I gain weight if I quit using tobacco?

After quitting tobacco, the body must adjust to a drop in nicotine levels. This might include an increased appetite and cravings for comfort food, which can lead to weight gain.

**HOWEVER,** as smoking also contributes to fat accumulation, it isn’t an efficient way of controlling weight or preventing obesity.

You can avoid gaining weight by using the following strategies:

1. Avoid skipping meals  
2. Listen to your body  
3. Eat healthy snacks  
4. Chew sugar-free gum  
5. Engage in physical activity  
6. Meditate  
7. Keep tempting food out of the house  
8. Take part in an activity or hobby

**Did you know?**

Women often expect to gain *double* the amount of weight gained on average.

How can I quit using tobacco?

When you are ready, here are a few ways to get started:

- Talk to a health professional.
- Join a support group.
- Eat well.
- Stay active.

Resources

- Smoker’s Helpline (1 877 513-5333)
- Tobacco Atlas (tobaccoatlas.org)
- Canada’s Food Guide (healthycanadians.gc.ca)
- Heart&Stroke Healthy Weight Action Plan (heartandstroke.on.ca)