

## Food Tips for Quitting Healthy Eating to Handle Nicotine Cravings

Congratulations on your decision to quit smoking! Each day that you don't smoke is a small victory. Changing how you eat while you're quitting smoking can also make a huge difference to your health. Properly-timed meals packed with nutritious and wholesome foods can help maintain blood sugar levels, decrease irritability and mood swings, and help reduce your cravings for a cigarette.

### Tips to lessen cravings once you stop smoking

#### ***Eat regularly***

Don't go too long without eating. Skipping meals can result in overeating later in the day and irritability, which may make it harder to resist cravings. Eat three meals and one to two snacks everyday. That works out to eating about every 3-4 hours. Regular meals and snacks will maintain healthy blood sugar levels and balance your mood.

#### ***Have breakfast every day***

Many people think skipping breakfast helps with weight loss, but that is not true. Research shows that skipping breakfast is linked to weight gain from making impulsive food choices that are higher in calories, fat and sugar. Eating breakfast will kick-start your metabolism and will help burn more calories throughout the day. Keep healthy convenient food items on-hand for a

quick, "on-the-go" breakfast such as yogurt, fruit, applesauce, high fibre cereal, whole grain pita and low fat cheese strings.

#### ***Choose healthy snacks***

Healthy snacks are a great way to fill the gap between meals so you don't overeat at your next meal.

Snacks can:

- Help meet your daily nutrition needs;
  - Boost your energy;
  - Prevent cravings for foods higher in fat, sugar and sodium.
- Healthy snack ideas can include plain air-popped popcorn, unsalted nuts, whole grain cereal, low-fat yogurt, hummus, whole grain crackers, carrot sticks, cottage cheese, celery and apples.



## **Focus on higher fibre foods**

Fibre is an important component of a healthy balanced diet. We get fibre from plant-based foods.

There are two types of fibre: *insoluble* and *soluble*.

“Bowel friendly” insoluble fibre contains cellulose, hemicelluloses and lignin. This type of fibre helps your digestive system process food and absorb nutrients. It helps your bowel to pass food by making stools soft and bulky.

It also helps keep you feeling full for longer and so helps to control your appetite. Sources of insoluble fibre include legumes, wholegrain breads, cereals and pastas, whole bran, oats, corn bran, nuts and seeds.

“Heart friendly” *soluble* fibre contains gums and pectin. This type of fibre lowers LDL (“bad”) cholesterol levels and controls blood sugar. It can also help prevent certain types of cancer, e.g., colon cancer. It can be found in all vegetables and fruit, oats, legumes and psyllium.

You don’t really need to worry about how much you’re getting of each type. You just want to make sure you’re getting enough. Fortunately, that isn’t hard to do. Here’s how:

- Start your day by eating a **high-fibre cereal**, one with at least four grams per serving. You can also add more fibre by topping your cereal with banana slices, strawberries or raisins.
- **Grab a fruit** as part of a meal or snack.
- Use **whole wheat pasta** or **brown rice** instead of white pasta or white rice for dinner.



- Add **lentils** or **beans** to soups, casseroles and salads.
- **Pack more vegetables** into an omelet or casserole, top your pizza with broccoli or spinach and add corn or peas to your favourite soup recipe.
- **Add ground flaxseeds** to cereal, porridge, roti or tortilla dough or dahl.

## **Choose water first to quench your thirst**

Staying hydrated will help you feel less tired, irritable and hungry. Enjoy a glass of low fat white or chocolate milk or fortified soy beverage or 100% fruit or vegetable juice. Try sparkling water or low sodium club soda with a slice of lemon, lime or orange for a bubbly low calorie beverage.

## **Keep your mouth and hands busy**

In the past, smoking cigarettes kept your hands and mouth very busy a lot of the time. Now, as you are stopping smoking, it may be helpful to keep your hands and mouth busy in other ways – at least for the first six (6) months or until your cravings have decreased.

### **Here are some ideas:**

- snack on foods that are crisp, crunchy and take a long time to chew such as low sodium (salt) pretzels, plain air-popped popcorn, whole grain crackers, raw cut up vegetables, e.g., carrots, red and green pepper, celery, zucchini sticks, cucumber slices, and fresh fruit
- drink water, sip on it when you have a craving
- chew sugar-free gum
- suck on a mint toothpick

