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OUTLINE

Stress and Weight Gain

Knowledge Topic references are located in a separate section of the Baby Steps Help Guide e-resource.

Participant handout references are not included, but are available upon request by contacting the tru@ahs.ca.

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| Goal | To increase participants' knowledge about stress and weight gain, two of the most important factors in a woman's decision and success in becoming tobacco-free. |
| Objectives | <p>By the end of the learning session, participants will be able to identify</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. how weight gain can affect a woman's decision to quit or return to tobacco 2. five ways to manage stress when quitting tobacco 3. three ways to manage a healthy weight |
| Presentation approach | <p>As a one-to-one service provider or group facilitator, decide how you will share information and support reflection by participants. You may wish to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • print and hand out the information sheets • share the information sheets using a laptop, tablet or cell phone • visit the websites and links with participants to point out where they can find additional information • engage in large or small discussion groups (if in a group setting) • have participants write down what they have learned on the handout sheets provided, or share their learning verbally |
| Facilitator/ service provider backgrounders | <p>There are two facilitator background documents, two activity sheets and two participant resources for you to review as preparation on this topic:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>I'm Already Worried about My Weight</i> 2. <i>Stress and Stopping Tobacco</i> 3. <i>Stress and Weight Gain: Where Do I Stand?</i> (activity sheet) 4. <i>Stress Reduction</i> (activity sheet) <p>The appendices on "Girls, Women, Health and Tobacco Use" and "Using a Principle-Based Approach" may also be helpful to review.</p> |
| Participant resources | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Managing Stress</i> (handout) 2. <i>Managing a Healthy Weight</i> (handout) |
| Additional resources and information | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AHS Healthy Pregnancy Weight Gain (weight advice for health providers) 2. Healthy Parents, Healthy Children e-resource (weight advice for clients) 3. AHS Healthy Eating Starts Here 4. AlbertaQuits QuitCore handouts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stress and Relaxation</i> • <i>Physical Activity and Stopping Smoking</i> • <i>Physical Activity Goals</i> • <i>Planning to Be Physically Active</i> |

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FACILITATOR BACKGROUND I'm Already Worried about My Weight

Stress and Weight Gain

Women and girls who try to stop using tobacco and want to avoid relapsing may find stress and fear of weight gain as common barriers or triggers.

Weight Gain

The fear of gaining weight is the number-one reason why women may not consider trying to quit tobacco.^[1] For many women and girls, their self-esteem is often tied to weight and physical appearance, and negative feelings about their bodies can generalize to their entire selves.^[2] Women and girls may feel that if they stop using tobacco, then they will lose their most effective tool for staying slim. In fact, some recent evidence has shown that girls who fear delivering a large baby may start smoking because they have heard that it reduces a baby's birth weight.^[3,4] The fear of gaining weight can be a barrier to stopping smoking, and some women will return to using tobacco as soon as they feel they have gained "too much" weight postpartum.^[5]



Smoking and the nicotine in tobacco products affects a person's metabolism and body weight.^[1] Nicotine use can result in reduced body weight and other metabolic and endocrine effects. Nicotine causes weight loss by reducing a person's appetite/food consumption, and since it is a stimulant, it also increases their metabolic rate.^[1] When talking with clients, setting an expectation about how much weight gain a woman can expect may not be helpful, and may actually be a discouraging message.

It isn't necessary or helpful to focus on statistics, but the following information may help to guide your conversation. Most, but not all, people who quit tobacco experience weight gain. Of those who do gain weight, most will gain less than 10 pounds. However, studies show there is a broad range of weight gain, with as much as 10 percent of people who quit gaining as much as 30 pounds.^[5] One might expect that the more tobacco a person uses, the lower their body weight. In fact, studies have shown that a person's risk of obesity actually increases with the amount of cigarettes they smoke.^[6]

Nicotine is known to be an appetite suppressant.^[1,7] Theories as to why the majority of women gain weight after quitting include:^[1]

- Once a woman is tobacco-free, her appetite and pleasure of eating food may increase
- Using tobacco as a reward (e.g., a smoke break) is replaced with having something to eat
- Reward pathways in the brain are re-activated by the pleasure of tasting and smelling food and may increase a woman's desire for foods high in sugar, fat or carbohydrates
- Tobacco may have helped the woman curb her overeating or compulsive-eating tendencies (those who historically binge eat are more likely to have lower quit rates and to gain more weight after quitting)

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FACILITATOR BACKGROUNDER

I'm Already Worried about My Weight

It's helpful to keep a positive frame of mind when discussing weight gain. In preparation for a quit or change attempt, ask your client if she is open to discussing her feelings about her weight. Weight gain can be mitigated with personalized, evidence-based management techniques.

You can review food choices, portion sizes and patterns of physical activity with your client. Help her make a plan to manage foods that tempt her and to choose healthy options. If she likes to keep her mouth busy with something, have her try a toothpick or sugar-free gum. If weight gain is a big concern, suggest she talk to her doctor about a referral to a registered dietitian or for information about the Alberta Healthy Living Program (www.ahs.ca/ahlp). If physical activity is a concern, you can offer to refer her to a program for pregnant or postpartum women (if one is available in her community).

The key message is that using tobacco to manage a person's weight is not a good choice. The health risks from smoking a pack of cigarettes per day are equal to those caused by weighing an extra 57 kilograms (125 pounds)!^[8] The health benefits of quitting tobacco far surpass the extensive harmful consequences of continuing to use it. Within six months of quitting, most people will have lost some of that initial weight they gained.^[7]

Resources

- [Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide](#) (Health Canada)
- [Food and Nutrition](#) (Ready or Not Alberta)
- [Healthy Eating Starts Here: Steps to a Healthier You](#) (Alberta Health Services)



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FACILITATOR BACKGROUNDER

Stress and Stopping Tobacco

Will the Stress of Quitting Harm My Developing Baby?

A common misperception is that quitting tobacco during pregnancy causes stress to the mother that will harm the baby more than the tobacco did, and therefore pregnant women should not try to quit until after their baby is born.^[9] This is not true. Quitting tobacco is always the best decision for your health, and the health of your baby.

While many people believe that tobacco relaxes them, it actually creates physiological stress (e.g., elevated heart rate and blood pressure). Pregnant women should be encouraged to stop using tobacco as early in their pregnancy as possible, but the fetus will benefit even if the mother doesn't quit until late in the pregnancy.^[9]

After the baby is born, shifting into the lifestyle of being a mother can be very stressful. This is multiplied when there are already children at home.^[10] Ask the client: "What is it about smoking that you feel helps you relax?" The behaviours associated with smoking (e.g., taking deep breaths, removing oneself from stressful situations) are often what really relieves stress, not the tobacco itself.^[11]

Here are some online resources about stress management that may be helpful:

- Helpguide.org
- Mayo Clinic
- Mind Tools





PARTICIPANT ACTIVITY SHEET

Topic: Stress and Weight Gain: Where Do I Stand?

Task: After reviewing the participant handout information sheets:

- review each question on this activity sheet
- talk about the answers with your health care provider and/or your group
- brainstorm possible strategies to manage stress and weight

Questions:

1. True or False.
Fear of weight gain can affect whether a woman chooses to quit tobacco.

2. True or False.
If I stop using tobacco while I'm pregnant, the stress will harm my baby.

3. True or False.
I would choose to start smoking again if I gain too much weight.

4. True or False.
Using tobacco relieves my stress.

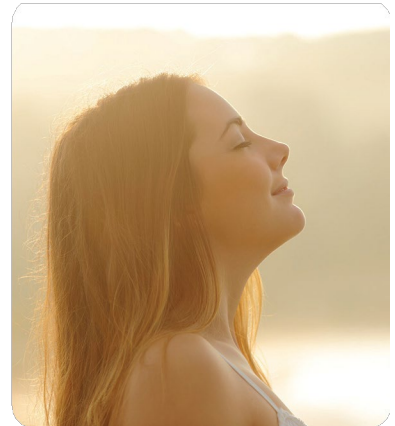
Stress-Reduction Exercises (10 minutes)

When stress overwhelms your nervous system, your body is flooded with chemicals -that rush of adrenaline you may experience that prepares you for “fight or flight.” While this stress response can save your life in emergency situations, it wears your body down when constantly activated by the stresses of everyday life.

Quitting tobacco can intensify your negative feelings related to stress, especially if you used tobacco to manage your stress in the past. Finding other ways to cope will be an important part of your plan to change your relationship with tobacco.

You can counteract stress by learning how to produce the relaxation response, a state of deep rest that is the polar opposite of the stress response. The relaxation response puts the brakes on stress and brings your body and mind back into a state of balance.

There is no single relaxation technique that is best for everyone. When choosing a technique, consider your specific needs, preferences, fitness level and the way you tend to react to stress. The right relaxation technique is the one that resonates with you, fits your lifestyle and is able to focus your mind in order to elicit the relaxation response. You may find that alternating or combining different techniques will keep you motivated and provide you with the best results.



How you react to stress may influence the relaxation technique that works best for you:

- The “fight” response: If you tend to become angry or agitated under stress, you will respond best to stress-relief activities that calm you down, such as meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing or guided imagery.
- The “flight” response: If you tend to become depressed or withdrawn under stress, you will respond best to stress-relief activities that stimulate and energize your nervous system, such as rhythmic exercise, massage, mindfulness practices or yoga.

To get started with either approach, you may find it helpful to use physical activity that engages your arms and legs (e.g., walking, running, dancing, tai chi), focusing on the sensations in your limbs as you move that help burn off that adrenaline rush.

Progressive muscle relaxation sequence



- Find a comfortable position, loosen your clothing and remove your shoes.
- Flex or tighten the muscles in sequence, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold each for a count of 10.
- Relax. Focus on the tension flowing away and the way you feel the body part become limp and loose.
- Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.

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PARTICIPANT ACTIVITY SHEET

- When you're ready, shift your attention to the next body part in the sequence. Repeat the same sequence of muscle tension and release.
- Move slowly up through your body, contracting and relaxing each muscle group as you go.
- It may take some practice at first, but try not to tense muscles other than those intended. Follow this order:
 1. Right foot, then left foot
 2. Right calf, then left calf
 3. Right thigh, then left thigh
 4. Hips and buttocks
 5. Stomach
 6. Chest
 7. Back
 8. Right arm and hand, then left arm and hand
 9. Neck and shoulders
 10. Face



(Adapted from: <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/relaxation-techniques-for-stress-relief.htm>)

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PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

Managing Stress

No matter how powerless you may feel in the face of stress, you still have control over your thoughts and emotions, and the way you deal with problems. Stress management involves changing the stressful situation when you can, changing your reaction when you can't, taking care of yourself and making time for rest and relaxation. The first step is to recognize the true sources of stress in your life.

Start a stress journal

A stress journal can help you identify the regular stressors in your life and the way you deal with them. Each time you feel stressed, keep track of it in your journal. As you keep a daily log, you will begin to see patterns and common themes.

Write down:

- what happened that led to you feeling stressed (make a guess if you're unsure)
- how you felt, both physically and emotionally
- how you acted in response
- what you did to make yourself feel better
- whether the action you took helped



Think about the ways you currently manage and cope with stress in your life. Your stress journal can help you identify them. Are your coping strategies healthy or unhealthy? Helpful or unproductive? Unfortunately, many people cope with stress in ways that compound the problem.

Learning healthier ways to manage stress

If your methods of coping with stress aren't contributing to your greater emotional and physical health, it's time to find healthier ones. No single method works for everyone or in every situation, so experiment with different techniques and strategies. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control.



Stress-management strategy #1: Get moving

- Take your dog for a walk
- Walk or ride your bike to the grocery store
- Use the stairs at home or work, rather than an elevator
- Park your car in the farthest spot in the lot and walk the rest of the way
- Pair up with an exercise partner and encourage each other as you work out
- Play ping pong or an activity-based game with your kids or friends

Stress-management strategy #2: Get social

- Have lunch or coffee with a friend
- Go to the movies or a concert
- Call or email an old friend
- Go for a walk with a workout buddy
- Meet new people by taking a class or joining a club

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PARTICIPANT HANDOUT Managing Stress

Stress-management strategy #3: Avoid unnecessary stress

- Learn how to say “no”
- Avoid people who stress you out
- Take control of your environment

Stress-management strategy #4: Alter the situation

- Express your feelings instead of bottling them up
- Be willing to compromise
- Manage your time better



Stress-management strategy #5: Change your inner talk

- Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective
- Look at the big picture
- Adjust your standards

Stress-management strategy #6: Accept the things you can't change

- Don't try to control the uncontrollable
- Look for the upside
- Learn to forgive



Stress-management strategy #7: Make time for fun and relaxation

- Set aside time to relax
- Do something you enjoy every day
- Keep your sense of humour

Stress-management strategy #8: Adopt a healthy lifestyle

- Eat a healthy diet
- Reduce caffeine and sugar
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco and drugs
- Get enough sleep

Adapted from: <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-management.htm>

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PARTICIPANT HANDOUTS

Managing a Healthy Weight

Weight gain is the number-one barrier for women in their decision to quit tobacco and stay tobacco-free. Eating healthy is the most important factor for achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. Weight loss is complex, and may not be a good choice when you are pregnant or just after your baby is born.

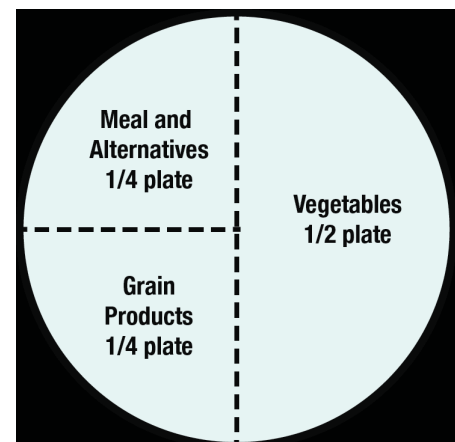
For more information, talk to a registered dietitian, who can help you develop a plan that meets your health goals. You may be able to find a dietitian through your family doctor or employee assistance plan, or by working with a private-practice dietitian in your community.

All pregnant and postpartum women and girls should speak with their family doctor and/or dietitian before making changes to their diet and activity levels.

Steps to healthier eating

Healthy eating can give you energy, help you achieve and maintain a healthier weight and reduce your risk of diabetes, heart diseases and cancer. Here are some steps you can take for a healthier you.

1. Eat three regular meals, plus 1–2 snacks, if needed, throughout the day.
2. Know your portions. How much you eat is as important as what you eat. Plan a healthy plate by filling one half with vegetables and fruit, one quarter with meat and alternatives and one quarter with whole grains.
3. Eat vegetables and fruit at each meal and snack. Aim for 7–10 servings per day.
4. Eat more fibre by choosing whole-grain products, vegetables and fruits, and by choosing beans and lentils more often than meats.
5. Choose healthy drinks. Drink water throughout the day and milk at meals. Avoid drinks with added sugar.
6. Choose foods that are lower in salt. Most of the salt we eat comes from processed foods and foods from restaurants. Read the label to find out if a food is high in sodium. Foods with a sodium higher percentage of your daily value than 15% are considered high in sodium.
7. Use healthy cooking and baking methods like steaming, stir-frying, roasting and poaching.
8. Get the low down on fats. Include a small amount (30–45 ml, or 2–3 tbsp) of healthy fats and oils each day. This includes oil used for cooking, salad dressing and margarine. Limit deep-fried foods, butter, lard or hard margarine.



How can I get started?

- Set goals for healthier eating.
- Start with keeping a record.

Get active

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines say that to see health benefits, people over 18 years old should do at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic physical activity each week. An example of moderate activity is a brisk walk.

Each session should last at least 10 minutes. Adults should also do muscle- and bone-strengthening activities at least two times per week.

There is a relationship between the health benefits you notice from being active and how much, how often and the intensity of the activities you engage in.

Is physical activity safe for you to begin?

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada,
“The recommended level of physical activity applies to all adults aged 18-64 years who do not have a suspected or diagnosed medical condition. These guidelines may be appropriate if you are pregnant. Consult a health professional if you are unsure about the types and amounts of physical activity most appropriate for you.”

For more advice on healthy weight and the Canada Food Guide for pregnant women, please visit Alberta Health Services' [Healthy Parents, Healthy Children](http://www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca) resource at www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca.