



Stop smoking, but keep the caffeine

Withdrawing from an addiction to nicotine makes quitting smoking a daunting challenge. But because smoking can clearly increase the risk of dying early from heart disease, diabetes, lung cancer, respiratory disorders, mouth cancer and other ailments, the effort is well worth it.

Everyone has their own way of changing bad habits. Some taper off slowly, while others take the "all or nothing" approach and try to change every habit they think is unhealthy.

Unfortunately in the case of smoking, both approaches usually result in weight gain. In fact, smokers typically cite weight gain as a reason to not quit.

To successfully kick the habit without gaining weight, it is usually best to not change too many habits at once. This particularly pertains to drinking coffee.

Question: Why isn't it a good idea to give up cigarettes and coffee at the same time?

Answer: A Danish study published in the June issue of

the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition indicates that going cold turkey on both nicotine and caffeine could set the stage for greater weight gain.

The study used nicotine gum, known to double the rate of successfully quitting smoking. The gum also helps relieve nicotine withdrawal symptoms and to diminish weight gain, partly because it boosts the number of calories burned while a person is at rest by about 5 percent.

The Danish study tested how the combination of caffeine and nicotine affected the rate of calories burned at rest. The results: 1 milligram of nicotine (half that found in most nicotine gum) increased calorie expenditure at rest by an average of 3.7 percent, and 2 milligrams increased it by 4.9 percent over a 2 1/2-hour period.

When 100 milligrams of caffeine (about one cup of coffee's worth) was added to the 1 milligram of nicotine in gum, it boosted the calorie-burn rate by 8.5 percent. So, adding caf-

feine was much more effective than doubling the nicotine dose. Consequently, the addition of caffeine to the use of nicotine gum could help to gradually decrease nicotine use while minimizing weight gain.

Q: Are there other possible benefits?

A: Yes. Nicotine is known to make the body's cells less responsive to insulin. This can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease and likely adds to the risk of developing adult-onset (non-insulin-dependent) diabetes. In comparison, the health effects of caffeine on the body are minor. A number of studies have even reported some potential health benefits of moderate caffeine consumption. So, a cup of coffee along with the use of nicotine gum looks like a winning combination.

Overall, whatever the approach to quitting smoking, to avoid the usual weight gain, it is likely best to keep enjoying some coffee, tea or other source of caffeine.

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