Smoking causes serious health problems such as heart disease, lung disease and cancer.
And yet many people worry that they will gain weight if they quit smoking.
But it is possible to stop smoking AND maintain your weight.

Will you gain weight if you quit smoking?
Some people do and some people don’t. About one in four actually loses weight. If you have a history of gaining weight you may be more likely to gain a few pounds. Smokers who do gain weight when they quit put on less than 2 kg (5 lbs) and many lose it within 2 years.

Make a quit plan
Set a quit date. Try to set it for a time when you can avoid high stress situations. Keep your normal routine. You might be tempted to eat more if you quit just before a holiday.

Reduce cravings
Drink 6 - 8 extra glasses of water a day to help to reduce cravings. If you crave sweet things use sweeteners or sugarless gum.
Discuss using nicotine replacement (NRT) or bupropion (Zyban) with your doctor or pharmacist. They increase chances of success by reducing the cravings.

Increase activity
Stopping smoking can change your metabolism. When you stop smoking you may need to increase your activity levels to keep your weight the same. Try a brisk walk each day, get off the bus a stop earlier, and always walk up stairs instead of using the lift. You'll be fitter so why not take up a new sport or activity? Hong Kong gliding, gardening, swimming, hill walking, - the choice is endless. Your local library or leisure centre will have contacts.

Distractions
Many recent ex-smokers need distractions to keep their minds off the cravings. Snacking can seem like a replacement for smoking - but not if you don't want to gain weight. Try sugarless gum or flavoured toothpicks. Keep your hands busy. Try drawing or sewing or doing repairs. Now is the time to learn guitar or take up mosaic! Talk to a friend or do some gardening or clean out that cupboard you've been meaning to do.

Reduce stress
Instead of reaching for a cigarette or food try taking some deep breaths. Breathe in deeply, hold it then blow out very slowly. This can get you through a craving and help to reduce a moment of stress.
You can increase the impact by imagining a restful, smoke-free place. Picture yourself sitting on a swing in the garden or walking in the hills or lying on a beach.
Make positive statements to yourself such as "I am calm and relaxed". Smoking doesn't reduce stress. It is the temporary relief from nicotine craving.
In the longer term, not smoking will reduce your stress levels.

Watch what you eat
After you quit smoking, food will taste and smell better so you may be tempted to eat more. Try not to substitute food for smoking. Try low salt, low fat nibbles if you do need to snack. Keep some chopped raw vegetable sticks and fruit in the fridge. Avoid sweets and in particular watch your fat intake! Eat low fat and non-fat foods. Make cereals and grains, fruit and vegetables and salads a regular part of your meals. But don't cook with or cover things with added fat. Use semi-skimmed or skimmed milk and avoid hidden fats in biscuits, cakes and crisps.

Get support
Ask your friends, family and workmates for help and support to get through stopping smoking.
Ask your doctor, health visitor or a community dietitian to help you set a sensible eating plan for your personal lifestyle and culture.
Join a stop smoking group. You can ask your local health services or smokers helpline or NHS Direct for contacts.
Talk to a counsellor by calling one of the freephone smokers helplines.

Reward yourself!
Give yourself a treat with flowers or a night at the cinema. Or take a walk in your favourite park or stretch of countryside.
Change your habits
When you first stop smoking, avoid those situations where you used to smoke - parties, pubs or coffee breaks. You need to substitute these activities for a short time with alternatives to smoking. Reading or walking or shopping or going to see a supportive friend might be better just for a time. Instead of smoking after a meal try eating a strong sugar free breath mint or brush your teeth.

Don’t give up if your weight is up
Make stopping smoking your number one priority. If you do gain a few pounds, don’t pick up a cigarette. Do what you can to avoid weight gain but accept that you may still gain a few pounds. You cannot continue to smoke and stay healthy and don’t put off stopping smoking to another day. The same can happen again. The health hazards of smoking - heart and lung disease and cancer - are far more dangerous than a few pounds.

Where to get help to quit
Your doctor, practice nurse or pharmacist can advise you about stop smoking medications that can reduce withdrawal symptoms and double your chances of success. Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) reduces withdrawal symptoms by giving lower doses of nicotine. It comes as patches, nasal spray, tablets, gum and inhalators. Gum and tablets can lower the desire to snack. NRT can be bought from any pharmacist and is available on prescription. There are also non-nicotine medications available on prescription that reduce cravings.
Ask your GP.

Telephone helplines offer free, confidential access to stop smoking counsellors. They can also give you a contact for the local stop smoking service.

• (England)
  NHS Smoking Helpline 0800 169 0 169
• (Wales)
  NHS Smokers Helpline 0800 169 0 169
• (Northern Ireland)
  Smokers Quitline 028 9066 3281
• (Northern Ireland)
  Smokers Helpline 0800 85 85 85
• (Scotland)
  Smokeline 0800 84 84 84
• (UK)
  Quitline* 0800 00 22 00
• (Republic of Ireland)
  Quitline 1850 201 203

Ask UK Quitline or NHS Smoking Helpline for Asian helpline numbers.

Internet help is available with information and chat lines for smokers who are trying to quit.
• www.cash.org.uk: links to stop smoking sites
• www.quitnet.org
• www.givingupsmoking.co.uk

Stop smoking centres are open all over the country. They have trained staff to give one-to-one advice and some offer group support. Telephone a smokers help line to find the centre nearest to you.