

Can My Weight Make My Joint Pain Worse?

For people with arthritis, added weight increases joint pain. It can destroy the cartilage of the joints, especially hips and knees.



Mary's doctor told her that if she lost some weight, she would once again be able to sleep on her side because the arthritis in her hips wouldn't hurt as much. For Mary, learning that weight loss would help was great news. She had been sleeping very poorly for months and was starting to develop signs of diabetes – a disease that runs in her family. Losing weight offered a way for her to take control.

CAN MY WEIGHT CAUSE ARTHRITIS?

People affected by excess weight are much more likely to develop arthritis in the knees and hips, making it hard to exercise. Without exercise, you can lose your ability to control pain and move freely, limiting your daily activities. Pain disrupts sleep, which also can make your health worse. Arthritis can lead to permanent disability, need for chronic pain medicine, and joint surgery.

HOW CAN I RELIEVE PAIN AND OTHER SYMPTOMS?

Start easing your pain and other symptoms by managing your weight. Research shows that:

- Every 1 pound of weight loss = 4 pounds of relief on your knees.
- 15 pounds of weight loss can cut knee pain in HALF.

Where Do I Start?

Managing your weight with a healthy diet and physical activity can help you reduce your pain. But don't try to make too many changes at once. Instead, pick just one thing you feel ready to focus on for the next several weeks.

Choose a goal that you believe you can achieve. Work on it for 6 to 8 weeks. Here are a couple of examples:

- I will eat 3 cups of vegetables per day for at least 4 days per week.
- I will work out by walking 3 days per week for 30 to 45 minutes.

Feel free to choose your own goal.

Making Changes

TIPS TO GET YOU ON YOUR WAY

There are many ways to get started. Here are a few ideas to choose from or you can make up your own:

- Cut back on portion sizes.
- Eliminate foods from your home that promote overeating.
- Keep fresh fruit on hand for snacks.
- Go for a walk after dinner.
- Turn off the TV during dinner.
- Move the TV out of the bedroom.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Add a vegetable to either lunch or dinner (or both) each day.
- Pack your own lunch each day.
- Make a new friend who wants to walk several days a week.
- Buy a pedometer to track your steps taken each day.
- Buy a bicycle and use it to ride to work or on weekends.
- Plan a hiking vacation to a state or national park.
- Join a physical activity program.

John knew that the pounds had been creeping up for several years, but he didn't make the connection between the excess weight and the pain in his knees until his doctor mentioned it. His doctor wants him to take off some weight to ease the pressure on his aching knees. Easing the pain was worth it to John.

DID YOU KNOW?
1 pound of weight loss = 4 pounds of relief for your knees
15 pounds of weight loss can cut knee pain in HALF

Are You Ready to Make Changes to Manage Your Weight?



WHERE CAN I FIND HELP TO MAKE LIFESTYLE CHANGES?

Managing your weight can improve your joint pain. Here are some websites that can help you adopt a healthier lifestyle:

- **CHOOSE MY PLATE** – www.choosemyplate.gov
Learn about healthy eating, meal planning and portion control.
- **EAT RIGHT** – www.eatright.org
Get tips on nutrition and weight loss or find a registered dietitian in your area.
- **TRACK + REACT** – www.arthritis.org/tools-and-resources/tools/track-and-react/
This new web tool and app allows people with arthritis to track their physical activity, diet and symptoms.
- **WALK WITH EASE** – www.arthritis.org/wwe
Learn about this physical activity program for people with arthritis and other chronic conditions. It has been shown to reduce pain and improve health.
- **OBESITY ACTION COALITION** – www.obesityaction.org
Learn more about how obesity impacts your health, treatment options and weight bias.
- **YOUR WEIGHT MATTERS** – www.yourweightmatters.org
Take the Your Weight Matters Challenge today and talk to your healthcare provider about your weight.
- **AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR NUTRITION** – www.nutrition.org
Find valuable resources to help you live a healthier, more productive life, including scientific statements on topics like energy balance and the latest nutrition research.

On Your Mark, Get Set, Go!

Commit to making a change. Fill out the action plan below and keep it attached to your refrigerator or mirror so you can see it every day and stay motivated. Use the resources above to help you reach your goal.

MY ACTION PLAN

Today's Date is: _____ My weight today is: _____

My current measure of pain is: 😊 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ☹️ (circle a number)

I want to lose _____ pounds in _____ months.

The reason I want to take off 10 pounds is (fill in the reason below): _____

The single change in my lifestyle that I am tackling right now is: _____

The Osteoarthritis Action Alliance (OAAA) is a coalition of member organizations committed to elevating osteoarthritis (OA) as a national health priority and promoting effective policy solutions that address the individual and national toll of OA. As a leader in this public health effort, the OAAA promotes evidence-based interventions and the establishment of supportive policies, communication initiatives, and strategic alliances for OA prevention and management.



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