



The Weight & Osteoarthritis Connection

Did you know that your joint pain and your weight may be connected?





Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common type of arthritis. OA can be caused by excess body weight, aging, a prior joint injury, being female, genetics, and excessive/repetitive movement from certain jobs or sports. For most people, OA can get worse over time if you don't address the symptoms now.

Losing weight isn't easy, but it could mean a world of difference for joint pain. Weight loss might help relieve some of the stiffness, swelling and pain in your joints from OA. Here are some tips to get you started.

1 lb = **4 lbs** of pressure on knees

Just 1 pound gained can equal 4 pounds of pressure on your knees for those with joint pain. But it also works in reverse - losing 15 pounds can cut knee pain in half.

	<p>Set a goal – Choose a weight loss goal you believe you can accomplish. Even small amounts of weight loss help: losing 1 pound can equal 4 pounds of pressure off your knees.</p>
	<p>Take it slow – People who lose weight gradually and steadily (about 1 to 2 pounds per week) are more successful at keeping weight off. A goal of losing 10 pounds should take you 2 to 3 months or longer.</p>
	<p>Focus on lifestyle changes – Healthy weight loss isn't about quick fixes, extreme exercise or fad diets. Your journey is extremely personal. Experiment to find the methods that work best for you and that you can stick with over time. Here are some websites that can help you adopt a healthier lifestyle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YOUR WEIGHT MATTERS – yourweightmatters.org Take the Your Weight Matters Challenge today and talk to your healthcare provider about your weight. • CHOOSE MY PLATE – choosemyplate.gov Learn about healthy eating, meal planning and portion control. • FIND AN EXPERT – eatright.org/find-an-expert Find a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist in your area who can help you develop a weight management plan.

	<p>Get your family or friends involved – Making healthy lifestyle changes is tough when you go it alone. Ask your family or friends to support and join you on your journey to a healthier weight.</p>
	<p>Add exercise to diet – Most weight loss research finds that you probably won't lose weight with exercise alone. The things you eat and the amount you eat have the most impact on how much you weigh. But for people with OA, adding exercise to your weekly routine can also help relieve joint pain. Try low-impact activities like walking to keep you moving and build more strength.</p>
	<p>Stick with it – Don't try to make too many changes at once. Pick just one thing you feel ready to focus on for the next few weeks. Then work on it for 6 to 8 weeks to make it stick.</p>
	<p>Celebrate little wins – Give yourself a big pat on the back for every pound lost. Every pound you lose moves you closer to a life with less joint pain. Celebrate your successes with simple rewards like new music, an audiobook, a water bottle, new workout clothes or shoes, or even a phone call with your favorite person.</p>

Losing a few pounds can boost your overall health:

- ✓ Better manage health conditions like diabetes and heart disease
- ✓ Improve your sleep
- ✓ Impact your self-confidence and mental health
- ✓ Reduce your chances of needing orthopedic surgery
- ✓ Stay more active and get back to favorite hobbies/activities

There is no cure for arthritis. However, joint pain and OA symptoms can be managed through various treatments, physical activity, lifestyle changes, and education. Visit oaaction.unc.edu/jointpain to learn about treatment and lifestyle changes that get you on the path to less joint pain.

Q:
What advice would you give someone who wants to manage their weight to help with joint pain?

You can do it! Just do it! Start today. Don't wait for a "good day to start." Don't wait for Monday. Start slow and write in your gratitude journal. I'm grateful I started to walk today. Also, don't beat yourself up when you do 20 instead of 30 minutes. Count the win. Break up the increments. Remember, you are special, and your body deserves to feel good!

Denise Allen
 Individual with OA