



# Managing Arthritis and Weight Loss

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## Lose Weight and Reduce Discomfort Caused by Osteoarthritis

Carrying around extra pounds places additional stress on your joints. If you suffer have osteoarthritis (OA), those extra pounds may be causing you to suffer from increased joint pain.

The pressure placed on your joints can also increase the rate by which joint destruction occurs, which can result in a loss of function and independence at an earlier age than it would had if you maintained a healthy weight. If you need joint replacement surgery in the future, or if you have already had a joint replaced, future surgery may be needed sooner than if you maintain healthy weight.

Maintaining the health of your joints requires you to balance rest and exercise carefully. When you are overweight, you may be less inclined to be active and stiffness in your joints may increase. Losing weight and protecting your bones will not only reduce arthritic pain, it will increase your level of energy, boost your self-esteem, and help you sleep well at night. Your zest for living will increase and your risk for developing serious illnesses, including diabetes and heart disease, will decrease.

## Healthy Weight Loss

Let's take a look at some ways you can achieve a healthy weight and relieve symptoms of OA. Contrary to the multitude of commercials on television, there is no secret to losing weight — you must burn more calories than you take in.

For most people, a healthy rate of weight loss is one to two pounds per week. You can lose weight by reducing the number of calories you consume or by exercising more; however the healthiest and most efficient way to lose weight is to do both.

While you should check with your health care provider for specific dietary recommendations before beginning a diet and exercise program, here are some tips that will aid your ability to achieve a healthy weight.

When you exercise, you burn calories at a faster rate than you do when you are sedentary and the increased rate of calorie burning lasts for hours after you stop exercising. An immediate effect of exercise is that it reduces your appetite.

Over time, as you build more muscle, your ability to lose weight increases further. Your body becomes more efficient at burning fat calories.

## Find the Right Exercise Program for You

A healthy exercise program increases flexibility, burns calories and increases strength. Yoga, swimming, and walking are excellent types of movement if you have OA, as they don't jar your joints.

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Swimming and walking provide excellent aerobic opportunities. Yoga may or may not offer that benefit, depending upon how vigorous it is, but is particularly helpful for aiding flexibility and building strength.

Yoga, swimming, and walking are just a few of the many exercises you can do to burn calories, increase strength, and keep your joints flexible. Find activities you enjoy, like gardening, dancing, rowing, or other forms of movement.

Start slowly and gradually increase the duration and intensity of your workout. The key is to find an activity you enjoy so you will stick with it. Consider whether you prefer to exercise alone or with others, and try to exercise at the same time each day. Over time, exercise will become a simple part of your daily routine.

*Next page: how your diet can help your arthritis symptoms.*

## **Choose a Healthy Diet**

Rather than choosing a diet program designed just for weight loss, choose to learn a new way of eating that you will be able to maintain for the rest of your life. This will prevent yo-yo dieting, which is when you lose weight only to gain it back.

Yo-yo dieting is particularly unhealthy; each time you lose weight and regain it makes the next time you try to lose weight more difficult. So, get to the root of the issue by eating healthy foods and taking supplements if necessary to support the health of your entire body. Proper nutrition is key to warding off illness, maintaining bone health and promoting longevity.

Many options are available. The best eating plans are not expensive and consist of simple, delicious foods that meet all of your nutritional requirements.

## **Eat Breakfast and Don't Skip Meals**

Eat breakfast every day. Eating breakfast stimulates your metabolism to burn calories efficiently all day long.

When you go for long periods without eating, as you would when you skip meals, your body goes into starvation mode, which results in weight gain. If you skip breakfast or lunch and then eat a big meal at night, a higher percentage of the calories you eat are converted to fat than if you ate the same number of calories throughout the day.

Some studies indicate that skipping meals can result in as much as a 30 percent increase in the rate of weight gain when compared with people eating the same number of calories spread out throughout the day.

## **Tips for Healthy Weight Loss**

- **Carry healthy snacks with you.** This ensures that when you go out you will be less likely to purchase spur of the moment fast foods.
- **Take a day every week to prepare extra meals.** Store them in your freezer for times you don't feel like cooking.
- **Fill up on whole grains, brothy soups, fresh fruits and vegetables.** These bulky foods will help you to feel satisfied and are filled with good nutrients.
- **Drink plenty of water.** You will feel full and your organs of elimination will be kept healthy, which is particularly important when you are losing weight. Healthy elimination enhances weight loss, increases your metabolic rate and detoxifies your body.
  
- **While exercise is essential for healthy weight loss, rest is important too.** If you are tired, you are at risk for making unhealthy dietary choices and may make excuses not to exercise.
- **Avoid crash or fad diets.** They promote yo-yo dieting. Most are not healthy and are hard to stick with.

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- **Surround yourself with people who are interested in a healthy lifestyle.** If members of your family are not supportive, find people who are. Friends, support groups and online groups can be very helpful.

Most importantly, be in this for the long run. Losing weight is not just about reducing joint pain and preventing debility; it is a step towards a more fulfilling life. Losing weight is empowering, energizing, and for many people life-changing.

You can do it even if you haven't been successful in the past. If you have many pounds to lose, concentrate on just losing five or 10. Even a small loss in weight offers health benefits.

Once you reach that goal, you will be able to set a new goal. You didn't reach the weight that you are overnight, so be willing to commit to your health from this day forward. You are worth it!