

## Weight loss for osteoarthritis

Being overweight is associated with many health issues like cardiovascular problems and diabetes, but it can also contribute to the pain you feel in your knee and difficulty with everyday activities. Losing weight is therefore recommended for people with osteoarthritis (particularly for those with knee osteoarthritis).

### How does losing weight help knee osteoarthritis?

Being overweight places extra stress on the joints of your legs, in particular the knees. Each kilogram of body weight results in an extra 4 kilograms of load going through the knees during usual daily activities. Even a few kilograms of weight loss can substantially reduce the load on your joints. Excess weight can also lead to higher levels of inflammation in the body which contributes to your knee osteoarthritis. Weight loss noticeably improves the amount of pain and stiffness experienced by those with knee osteoarthritis and helps them function better. Maintaining a healthier body weight might also help delay or avoid the need for medicines or surgery.

### How much weight loss gets the best results?

Most people experience improvements (e.g. less pain) after losing 5-10% of body weight. That means if you weigh 90kgs, you should notice you have less pain after losing between 5-9kgs. The more weight you lose, the greater the improvements in pain and function. Reduced pain and improved function is also greater if you combine dietary modification with exercise. There has been limited research investigating the effects of weight loss on joint symptoms in people with hip osteoarthritis.

### What do I need to do?

Losing weight involves making changes to your eating and drinking habits, as well as regular exercise.

While this sounds simple, we all know that losing weight and then keeping the weight off can be extremely difficult.

Some tips to help you include:

- Set yourself realistic goals and be patient. Don't beat yourself up or give up if you 'fall off the wagon' – get back on track and re-focus on your goal.
- Get your friends and family on board to help keep you motivated. Even better is to find someone who wants to lose weight with you so that you can help each other.
- Keep a food record of what you eat.
- Learn about healthy food choices.
- Eat slowly and savour every mouthful.
- Drink water regularly.
- Get enough sleep. Not getting enough sleep at night has been shown to contribute to weight gain and may even affect the amount of pain you experience in the knee.
- Plan exercise and physical activity into your schedule.

### Key points

- If you are overweight, losing weight will help reduce your pain and disability.
- Aim to lose around 5-10% of your body weight.
- Combine weight loss strategies with some exercise and physical activity.
- Think ahead to what eating habits you will change to help you keep the weight off long term.

