



# movin' on down

**Dropping a few pounds can work wonders in many ways - including reducing joint pain.**

"If you're overweight, shedding pounds reduces joint pain," said Dr. Zaheeruddin Sheikh, a rheumatologist with ThedaCare Orthopedics Plus. "Weight loss is part of the treatment for arthritic joint pain in the knees, hips, feet, ankles and lower back."

## **WEIGHED DOWN**

The more overweight you are, the more likely you are to get osteoarthritis - a deterioration of joint cartilage. Weight-bearing joints rely on healthy cartilage to function with ease and without pain. When you stand and move, weight naturally falls on your joints. Over time, the cartilage is strained. Extra weight can cause the deterioration to start earlier and progress faster. Plus, those additional pounds force you into awkward postures, causing more stress and overloading joints.

## **Lessen the load, decrease the pain**

Most of us will have osteoarthritis as we age. That's normal. Carrying around a lot of extra weight, however, almost ensures joint pain. Unfortunately, if your joints hurt, you're less likely to get the activity and exercise you need to help you lose weight. Your best option is to see a physician for treatment of the pain so you can be active. Once you lose the weight, you may likely be able to stop the medications.

"I know of many success stories," said Dr. Sheikh. "When severely overweight or obese patients with osteoarthritis lose a significant amount of weight, their knee pain stops, and so does their medication. They don't need it anymore."

## **DROP JUST A FEW**

Our hips and knees weren't intended to carry extra weight, so a gain or loss of a few pounds helps.

- A force of three to six times your body weight is absorbed by your knees while walking. An increase in weight increases the force. So, if you're 10 pounds overweight, the force on your knee is the equivalent of 30 extra pounds with each step you take. No wonder your knees hurt.
- For women of normal height, an 11 pound weight loss can cut in half the risk of developing knee osteoarthritis.

Data are from the Centers for Disease Control.

The first place to look for help in managing joint pain is your doctor. "We want to help you," said Dr. Richard Staehler of the NeuroSpine Center of Wisconsin. "Start with a conversation. There are many options for pain relief and weight loss. We can help with a custom plan that's as individual as you, and that looks at your overall health. Our goal is to help you manage your pain so you can be active."

**Jean DeKeyser,  
Successful weight  
loss champion**

Read her  
inspiring  
story on  
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