

Fact or Fiction Part 1: Seriousness of Osteoarthritis, Braces, Diet, and Weather

Key Points and References

Is arthritis just aches and pains, and not a serious condition?

- NO!
- Arthritis is the leading cause of community walking disability
- In the US, 27 million people have arthritis, and 8 million cannot walk a quarter of a mile in large part because of their arthritis symptoms
- Osteoarthritis is a progressive disease--symptoms like pain and stiffness come on slowly and a person may gradually decrease their activity
 - This can lead to weight gain, which is not only bad for arthritis, but also for other serious diseases like heart disease and diabetes
- Many things like exercise, weight loss, and home modifications can help
 - lots of research shows that moderate exercise improve pain and function

Will braces or orthotics help my arthritis?

- UNCERTAIN
- Valgus knee brace for people with knee osteoarthritis may provide some benefit
- Orthotics and shoe inserts may benefit people with foot problems
- The decision should be made based on the individual and the recommendations of health care providers
- Neoprene sleeve does NOT help arthritis symptoms
- If you do invest in a brace, orthotic, or shoe insert, the key to (possible) success is COMPLIANCE
 - You should wear your equipment at all times, not just on 'bad' days

Do cold and damp weather *cause* arthritis?

- NO!

- Cold and damp weather can affect symptoms associated with arthritis, but it does not *cause* the disease
- During stormy weather, when there is a low barometric pressure, people with arthritis often experience an increase in pain, but this should pass with the storm

Do nightshade vegetables (eggplant, potatoes, peppers, tomatoes) bring on flare-ups of arthritis?

- UNCERTAIN
- There is currently not enough evidence to support or refute this
- Some people experience an improvement in symptoms when removing these vegetables from their diet, but others do not
- If you do remove these from your diet, you may be missing important nutrients
 - be sure to speak with a nutritionist about how to get these elsewhere

Will poor diet *cause* arthritis?

- NO
- Poor diet in itself does not cause arthritis, but the effects of eating poorly can.
- Poor diet can lead to weight gain—obesity is one of the most important factors contributing to the development of knee osteoarthritis
- Being overweight can increase chances of developing knee osteoarthritis up to two times
- Being obese can increase chances of developing knee osteoarthritis up to seven times!
- Losing weight can help!
 - For those who are both overweight and have arthritis, losing weight can significantly improve pain and physical function
 - For every pound lost, there is a four pound reduction in load through the knees
 - The best way to lose weight is through a combination of diet AND exercise

- Ideally, you should lose 10% of your weight over 3 months
- Be sure to talk to a doctor, nutritionist, or other qualified health care provider to develop a weight loss plan that's right for you

Online Resources

Weight loss tools:

- SparkPeople: <http://www.sparkpeople.com/>
 - various diet, exercise, and weight tracking tools, healthy recipes, connecting with other people who have similar weight-loss goals
- NutriMirror: <http://www.nutrimirror.com/>
 - diet, exercise and weight tracking, see if you're meeting your nutrition goals every day, and change your target diet composition based on your specific needs
- FitDay: <http://www.fitday.com/>
 - track common things like calories, weight, and exercise, as well as level of hunger, energy, and happiness, which may provide insights into your diet and habits

Nutrition information:

- <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/#>
 - lots of info about nutrition, diet, exercise, tracking tools, and tips for healthy eating

Braces:

- <http://www.medmarketplace.com/BuyMedicalEquipment.aspx>
- <http://www.walgreens.com/store/c/home-medical-supplies-and-equipment/ID=359443-tier1?tab=home%20medical%20supplies%20%26%20equipment>

Arthritis-related statistics and information

- <http://www.everydayhealth.com/osteoarthritis/stages-of-progression.aspx>

- http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/data_statistics/arthritis_related_stats.htm

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Additional Resources

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