

- Body weight

Losing weight could help protect your knees from arthritis

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WEIGHT loss may help prevent the development and progression of knee osteoarthritis by as much as 22 percent, according to research published in the journal *Arthritis & Rheumatology*.

That was the benefit found in study participants who lost enough weight to drop from one body mass index (BMI) category to another - from "overweight" to "healthy weight," for instance. The study included 9,762 participants whose knees were X-rayed and tracked for four to five years.

Osteoarthritis, which affects the joints and is considered the most common type of arthritis, is often thought of as a "wear and tear" disease. It develops when the cartilage that acts as a cushion between the bones in a joint breaks down or wears away, leaving the bones to rub together and cause pain, stiffness and movement issues.

The researchers noted that even study participants who lost less weight still achieved "protection against structural degeneration of the knee."

The benefit of weight loss was found to apply not just to those who were overweight or obese "but also in people with a BMI in the normal range," they wrote. For example, those whose BMI dropped just one unit, to a lower number on the BMI chart (from a BMI of 19 to 18, for instance) were still about 5 per cent less likely to either develop osteoarthritis or have existing osteoarthritis worsen.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 32 million US adults have some type of osteoarthritis. Although the knees are the joints most often affected, osteoarthritis can develop in joints in other parts of the body as well, such as the hands, hips, neck and lower back. — The Washington Post