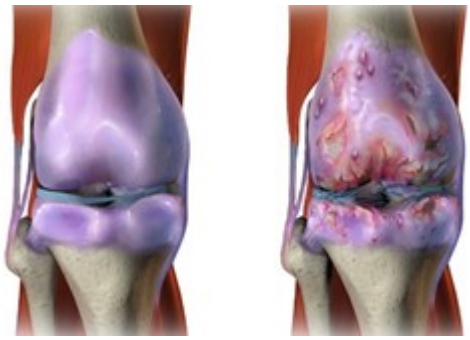
Can losing weight help with Osteoarthritis?

The Problem:
Osteoarthritis is a common complaint. It is estimated that 9.2% (approx. 2.2million) Australians suffer from osteoarthritis (https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/chronic-musculoskeletal-conditions/osteoarthritis/contents/what-is-osteoarthritis)

It is a condition characterised by joint pain, most often in our knees, hips, feet, spine and hands. Osteoarthritis is caused by the loss of cartilaginous support at the joints. This irritates the bony surfaces as they meet, causing pain.

As we know, many osteoarthritis sufferers end up having joint replacement surgery, particularly at when the affected joint is the hip or the knee. We are lucky to have this option available to us and joint replacement surgery is often highly effective. However, it is important to be aware of the conservative option and in the case of osteoarthritis, this is nearly always worth trying first!



The Mechanics:
Our musculoskeletal system is comprised of our skeleton, and our muscles. As our body places load through our skeleton all day long, it is no wonder osteoarthritic joints (with their loss of cartilage) become painful. The focus with osteoarthritis is hence placed on changing the skeletal system, and often, replacing the joint itself. However, the “Musculo”- skeletal system has its other half available! Our muscles obviously, are our movers. They push and pull to move our joints. They also, reduce load on our joints through their contraction. Hence why, the stronger the muscles surrounding the arthritic area, the less load on the joint, the less pain the client feels!

Strengthening is therefore a great way to reduce pain in osteoarthritic joints.

The other way we can reduce load and subsequently, pain, is through weight loss.
Now, weight loss is only of benefit if you have weight to lose. You can use a BMI calculator or talk to a health professional if

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you are unsure if this applies to you. It has been researched and found that losing 10% of your body weight can reduce pain related to osteoarthritis by up to 50%. For most this is an achievable goal with appropriate advice and assistance.

The below advice is generalised, and we do recommend speaking to a health professional (your GP, a dietician or your physiotherapist) for a personalised plan.



Weight Loss Tips for Osteoarthritis:

- Planned Exercise: As explained above, exercise is already a beneficial treatment for osteoarthritis and will be effective at reducing pain and improving quality of life. The key is finding a pain-free way to exercise and strengthen that you feel motivated to do regularly. Depending on what you enjoy and the affected joint, this could be cycling, walking, or using a cross-trainer. We do recommend that on top of any of these, you have at least 3 strength/resistance training sessions a week. It will be best to start this with a physio or personal trainer to ensure you are completing the exercises correctly and that you are placing your muscles under enough load.

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- Incidental Exercise: try and move your body a little more through-out the day. Standing for calls or meetings, walking or biking into the shops instead of driving and going for short walks in your lunch or before/after work is a great way to expend some energy and support your overall health and weight-loss.

- Clean up your diet: easier said than done, which is why we recommend speaking to a dietician or nutritionist for this area. One simple change you can try yourself is reducing the amount of processed food you are having. Try and substitute things in a packet for a serving of vegetable or fruit. Swap white bread for multigrain and try cutting out that after dinner sweets for a while! Keep the feeling of a pain-free body in mind and let people around you know what you are doing so that they can support you.

If you are suffering from osteoarthritic pain and would like some guidance on decreasing your pain and improving your quality of life, contact the practice today and speak to one of our qualified physios today for a plan to help you back In Balance

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