

# Arthritis: Take a Load Off

Nearly 50 million (two in every nine) people in the U.S. have been diagnosed with arthritis and the number is expected to skyrocket over the next two decades if Americans don't shape up, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

What is the major culprit causing Arthritis? Obesity. Other risk factors include aging, smoking and a family history of the disease.

Over time, extra weight makes you much more prone to developing arthritis. It also can cause arthritis to progress more quickly, leading to much more damage and pain once it has developed.

The reason: our weight-bearing joints take a beating each time we take a step. Hips and knees are subjected to three to five times – or more – of our total body weight as we walk. Every pound you're overweight adds about three to five extra pounds of pressure to each knee as you walk. That means if you're 50 pounds overweight, you're putting as much as 250 pounds of extra stress on your knees.

In osteoarthritis, cartilage (padding bone ends) at joints wears away. As a result, bare bones grind directly against one another. This causes pain and restricted movement. Over time, the strain of excess body weight can cause cartilage to break down.

**The bottom line: Lose the excess weight and you may also lose the pain.**



One of the best ways to prevent osteoarthritis and relieve aching joints is to shed pounds. Losing weight can't repair damage already done. But even modest weight loss can take a tremendous load off your joints.

The best way to lose weight is to eat a diet low in calories, fat, refined sugars and processed foods, and rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables, fiber, lean protein and calcium. Exercise also helps you trim down. Talk to your doctor about the best eating and exercise plan for you. It's generally recommended that people with arthritis avoid high-impact activities like running and stick to exercises like swimming and cycling that are easy on the joints

With the **BCBSAZ Lifestyle Coaching Program** you receive unlimited access to professional health coaches who have one goal – to support you! Your coach will:

- Provide you with personalized education you can trust
- Work with you by phone, secure email or online chat
- Help you prepare for doctor's visits so you can make the most of your time with the physician
- Help you make improvements to your diet and/or exercise to lose weight and reduce pain

To enroll in Lifestyle Coaching and get started call: **866-422-2729**