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## Weight loss may reduce arthritis disability

NEW YORK (Reuters) -- Overweight adults with osteoarthritis who lose just five percent of their body weight can reduce the amount of physical disability associated with this most common form of inflammatory joint disease, results of several studies suggest.

"It is more or less proven now that the most effective thing, if you have osteoarthritis of the knee, is weight loss," study co-author Henning Bliddal, of HS Frederiksberg Hospital in Copenhagen, Denmark, told Reuters.

"As such, weight reduction therapy in overweight osteoarthritic patients is a very appealing goal, both with regards to disease-specific pain and disability reduction as well as for overall health benefits such as cardiovascular risk reduction," co-author Robin Christensen, also of HS Frederiksberg Hospital, said in a statement.

To explore the association, Bliddal, Christensen, and their colleagues searched various databases to identify studies involving patients with knee osteoarthritis who experienced a change in weight.

Of the 23 studies that met their criteria, found that study participants experienced less pain and disability upon losing weight. Those three studies included more than 500 individuals.

The association between the study participants' weight loss and their reduced physical disability "seemed convincing," based on those findings, the researchers report.

In fact, computer models predicted that a weight loss of at least 5.02 percent, within a set time period, would significantly reduce physical disability in overweight individuals with osteoarthritis, study findings indicate.

A weight loss of 10 percent, however, "results in moderate -to-large improvement in self-reported physical disability," Christensen noted.

In light of these findings, Bliddal advises overweight individuals "to lose 10 percent of their weight within two months."

The best way to lose the weight is not by simply increasing their level of physical activity, however. "You can't exercise your weight down, you have to do something about your food," Bliddal said, adding that these patients should "start losing the weight first, and then exercise."

In so doing, "your knees will last longer," he said.

The findings were presented last week during the seventh Annual European Congress of Rheumatology in Amsterdam.

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