Healthy and Sustainable Weight Management

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT



If you are carrying excess body weight or body fat, weight management is the most evidence-based approach to improving symptoms and physical function. However, many people with arthritis may try to lose weight by cutting out entire food groups, fasting, or following unsustainable diets.

Successful weight loss is usually gradual. Rapid weight reduction often just reflects loss of body water and skeletal muscle rather than fat. Current evidence supports a balanced eating pattern alongside regular physical activity, adequate sleep, and stress management.

Healthy Weight Management Tips

- Set realistic weight-loss goals using the SMART framework: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

- Successful weight loss depends on reducing daily calorie intake. Portion size and regular physical activity are important too.

- Avoid elimination-style diets. Most weight-management approaches work by reducing calories, and there are no shortcuts.

- Weight loss is not always linear. If progress slows, don't be disheartened and keep going.

- It is unnecessary to check body weight weekly. Using a piece of tight clothing is a good way to assess progress.

- Setbacks are normal. It helps to have a backup plan you can return to when needed.

- Build physical activity gradually by combining everyday movement with strength-based activity where possible.

- Take small steps to build new habits. Consistency is a powerful driving force.

- Healthcare professionals, especially dietitians, can help along this journey.

Sustainable Strategies for Weight Management

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is the best approach for living with inflammatory arthritis. Successful sustainable weight loss results from a long-term lifestyle change. This includes changes in habit, setting realistic and measurable goals, sensible food choices, portion sizes, physical activity and keeping self-accountability. Long-term adherence results from making gradual changes that fit into everyday life.

Practical tips

- Reduce portion size.
- Use a food diary/tracking app.
- Bulk your plate with vegetables and wholegrains that keep you fuller for longer.
- Cut out 'hollow calories' (like sugars).
- Rely less on takeaways.
- Read food labels so you know what you are buying.

- Adhere to a plan that you can stick to.
- Include physical activity/exercise (which can also help pain and cardiovascular health).

Useful resources

- Listen to the **'Cooking with Arthritis' podcast** (S2E2): **https://creators.spotify.com/pod/profile/arthritisaction/episodes/S2-E2---Cooking-with-Arthritis-e274iii/a-aa530ia**
- Browse **Arthritis-Friendly Recipes**: **https://www.arthritisaction.org.uk/living-with-arthritis/resource-centre/recipes**

References

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2. Tackling Obesity in England (2001). Report by the Controller and Auditor General. National Audit Office. Available from The Stationary Office London.

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