

Preventing osteoarthritis

OSTEOARTHRITIS IS THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF ARTHRITIS

Prevention and early treatment are pivotal to halting the growing burden of osteoarthritis (OA).

In the upcoming decades the world is facing a steep **rise in the demand** for knee replacement surgery, with some countries forecasting a **900% increase**.



For some people, OA worsens over time, which is why it is important to get help for your symptoms when they first begin.

Even if you already have OA, there are steps you can take right now to stop it from getting worse and to improve your quality of life and wellbeing.



Regular exercise lowers your risk of OA, hip fractures, risk of falls in older adults and can prevent or delay the need for the surgery.



Risk factors for osteoarthritis

- **previous joint injury:** at any age (including as a child or young adult)
- **overweight/obesity:** puts strain on the joints (particularly the weight-bearing joints such as the hip and knee), and increases joint inflammation
- **age:** your risk of OA increases as you get older
- **being a woman:** OA is more common in women than men

- **family history:** OA may run in families, although studies have not identified a single gene responsible

The most **modifiable risk factors** are **joint injury** and **obesity**



Joint injury

After joint injury, rehabilitation involving exercise therapy (and patient education) should be the first line of treatment, regardless of whether you need surgery or not.

It is important to return to recommended levels of physical activity and to keep the muscles around the joint strong after an injury.

If you are having a difficult time increasing your physical activity or other physical tasks related to your job or recreation, speak to a physiotherapist about specific exercises to make things easier.



Weight loss

Having overweight or **obesity increases your risk of developing OA** by placing additional strain on your joints and increasing inflammation in your joints.

If appropriate, losing weight may help **lower a person's risk of developing OA** and can **improve symptoms** in people who already have OA.

5kg
or 5%



=

90%

lower chance
of knee
complaints
after 6 years



Preventing joint injuries

Speak to a **physiotherapist** about building an **individualised training programme**, this can reduce the risk of knee injuries by up to 50% and may help prevent OA.

If you already do a lot of sport, contact a physiotherapist about advice on how to **prevent injury** and incorporate appropriate **sport-specific strength training**.



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