

1 in 2 adults at risk for painful knee arthritis

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A landmark government study suggests nearly one in two people (46%) will develop painful knee osteoarthritis over their lifetime, with the highest risk among those who are obese. According to the Arthritis Foundation, the study underscores the immediate need for the public to understand what they can do to reduce the tremendous pain, disability and cost associated with arthritis.

Arthritis is exploding in an aging population of U.S. baby boomers. Nearly one in five U.S. adults (46 million people) has arthritis and an estimated 67 million people will be affected by 2030. Osteoarthritis, the most common type of arthritis, currently affects more than 27 million people in the U.S.

The study, published in the September issue of *Arthritis Care & Research*, was conducted using data from the Thurston Arthritis Research Center, University of North Carolina-based Johnston County Osteoarthritis Project. It is one of the largest longitudinal studies to monitor the onset and progression of knee and hip osteoarthritis in this country. While there were no significant differences in risk by sex, race and education, the study found that nearly two in three people (65%) who are obese will develop knee osteoarthritis over their lifetime. The study also found that those with a prior knee injury had a lifetime risk of 57%.

"This groundbreaking research reaffirms the importance and need for Americans to take action to prevent the problems that knee osteoarthritis can cause and to reduce its occurrence," said Janet Collins Ph.D.,

director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. "CDC's Arthritis Program works in partnership with states and national organizations to promote arthritis self-management education and physical activity that help people with arthritis improve the quality of their lives."

Most Americans are unaware of the seriousness of arthritis and the impact it can have on their lives. Arthritis is the nation's most common cause of disability and costs the U.S. economy more than \$128 billion annually. Knee osteoarthritis, the most frequent form of lower extremity arthritis, contributes to 418,000 knee replacement procedures annually and in 2006 accounted for 496,000 hospital discharges and \$19 billion in hospital charges.

"While Americans are looking forward to longer life expectancies than ever before, the reality is that they will also be facing many more years of pain and disability," said Dr. John H. Klippel, president and CEO of the Arthritis Foundation. "Obesity in this country is at an all-time high, putting millions at risk for disabling arthritis. Coupled with sedentary lifestyles and an aging baby boomer population, we are facing a public health crisis if Americans and Congress don't take action.

To reduce the pain and disability of arthritis, the Arthritis Foundation recommends the following:

- Learn techniques to manage your arthritis. Participate in the Arthritis Foundation Self-Help Program, a self-management course that teaches people with arthritis how to manage the pain and challenges that arthritis imposes. The course has been shown to lead to a 40% reduction in pain.

- Control weight. For those already living with symptoms, losing 15 pounds can cut knee pain in half. Maintaining a healthy weight also can

lower a person's risk of osteoarthritis. In fact, one study showed that women who lost as little as 11 pounds halved their risk of developing knee osteoarthritis and its accompanying joint pain.

-- Get active. Many people think that physical activity can worsen arthritis. Nothing could be further from the truth. Physical activity can help decrease symptoms of osteoarthritis. In addition, physical activity is an important component of weight control and helps maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints. For joint-safe exercise programs, try the Arthritis Foundation's Life Improvement Series land or water exercise programs.

"People need to know there are things they can do now to help themselves. These actions will limit the impact of arthritis for both individuals and society as a whole," said Dr. Patience H. White, chief public health officer of the Arthritis Foundation. For information on how to get started, visit www.arthritis.org/prevent-osteoarthritis.php.

The Arthritis Foundation, according to Klippel, is also urging Congress to invest more in proven, evidence-based public health strategies developed by the CDC that reduce the impact of osteoarthritis and also to increase resources at the National Institutes of Health to find a cure for this debilitating disease.

Source: Arthritis Foundation

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