



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Go Light on the Joints

State-Specific Trends in Obesity Prevalence Among Adults with Arthritis — United States, 2003–2009

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

It's the perfect public health storm. Obesity, arthritis, and physical inactivity have combined to create a major problem among the aging US population.

Dr. Jennifer Hootman is an epidemiologist with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the impact of obesity on arthritis. Welcome to the show, Jennifer.

[Dr. Hootman] Thank you. I'm glad to be here.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jennifer, just how common is arthritis in the US?

[Dr. Hootman] Arthritis is one of the most common chronic conditions in the US. It affects about 22 percent of US adults, which is about 50 million people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Is aging in our population making arthritis a bigger problem?

[Dr. Hootman] Yes. Arthritis prevalence does increase with age, but two-thirds of the adults with arthritis are under age 65, so it's not a disease that just affects older adults.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the symptoms of arthritis?

[Dr. Hootman] Well, there's different types of arthritis. Osteoarthritis, the most common type, has pain, aching, stiffness, and swelling in and around the joint. The most common joints are the hands and knees. Rheumatoid arthritis is like an inflammatory type of arthritis. It can affect other organ systems, like the kidneys and the heart, and it has a lot of fatigue.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jennifer, how many people with arthritis are also considered obese?

[Dr. Hootman] In 2009, 35 percent of adults with arthritis were obese, and that's compared to 24 percent of adults without arthritis.

[Dr. Gaynes] How does obesity make arthritis worse?

[Dr. Hootman] Well, extra weight on the joints can increase pain and fatigue, decrease their function, increase the risk for disability, and increase the risk for having to have a total joint

replacement. Once people have had a joint replacement, it can also contribute to failure of that joint replacement.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the treatment options for arthritis?

[Dr. Hootman] Well, arthritis is a very manageable disease. People can do four things to help manage their arthritis. They should watch their weight. If they're overweight or obese, they should try to lose weight. Even small amounts of weight loss can have a big impact in reducing pain. They should be physically active because getting some exercise will burn calories, but even without weight loss, exercise is important because it strengthens the muscles around the joints. They should also get informed. Take a class or a course available in the community to help learn to manage their symptoms. And they should see their health care provider because early diagnosis and appropriate management can make the disease less severe.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jennifer, where can listeners get more information about arthritis and obesity?

[Dr. Hootman] They can go to the website www.cdc.gov/arthritis.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Jennifer. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Jennifer Hootman about the impact of obesity on arthritis.

Remember, obesity among adults with arthritis makes the disease progress more quickly, which can lead to activity limitations, increased pain, and disability. A healthy diet and regular exercise can result in weight loss and slow the progression of the problems associated with arthritis.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.