

Allergies linked to increased risk of osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis (OA), the most common form of arthritis, affects a significant number of people worldwide. This joint disease primarily affects older adults, usually over the age of 45. OA occurs when the bones and cartilage in the joints gradually deteriorate over time, often attributed to the natural ‘wear and tear’ on the joints. Jobs or lifestyles involving increased physical activity may increase the risk of developing OA. Inflammatory responses and factors like obesity, diabetes, and high cholesterol can worsen the condition.

OA is typically noticed in the knees, hips, and small joints of the hands, leading to joint pain, stiffness, swelling, reduced mobility, and muscle weakness. Unfortunately, there is no known cure for OA, so treatment mainly focuses on managing the symptoms.

A recent study published in the *Annals of Rheumatic Diseases* explored the potential association between OA and allergic conditions such as asthma and atopic dermatitis (eczema). The researchers discovered that individuals with allergic diseases had a higher likelihood of developing OA. The study analysed a large amount of data from insurance claims and electronic health records, including that of over a million people.

The findings showed that the risk of developing OA was 58% higher among individuals with asthma or eczema in the insurance claims dataset and 42% higher in the electronic health records dataset. This correlation suggests that allergies may contribute to the onset of OA.

These findings indicate that patients with allergic diseases may have a higher risk of developing OA. The study suggests that medications targeting the biological pathways involved in allergies could potentially benefit non-allergic patients with OA. This discovery could have significant implications for OA treatment, as current therapies focus on managing symptoms rather than addressing the underlying biological causes.



White Coat Syndrome

understanding and managing the fear of doctors

DR. NUR-A SAFRINA RAHMAN

Do you feel uneasy when entering a medical facility? Have you ever felt anxious when visiting a doctor or medical professional? Then you might have experienced ‘white coat syndrome.’ White coat syndrome, a common condition, affects many people worldwide. Understanding and managing this syndrome is important for accurate blood pressure readings and reducing stress during medical visits.

White coat syndrome is a common condition where people have high blood pressure in medical settings. This interesting phenomenon is a short-term rise in blood pressure caused by anxiety or stress and related to medical settings or interactions with health care professionals. It affects a large number of people, with estimates ranging from 15% to 30% of the population with hypertension.

The exact cause of this syndrome is still unknown, but experts believe it may be a natural response to medical settings. Recent research shows that the presence of healthcare professionals and the anticipation of medical procedures or tests can cause anxiety and temporarily increase blood pressure levels. This fear-driven phenomenon highlights how healthcare settings can affect people mentally and physically. People who are already afraid or anxious about medical environments or have had bad experiences may have an even stronger reaction.

White coat syndrome's impact on blood pressure measurements:

This condition can lead to misleading readings in a medical setting, as they may not accurately represent a person's true blood pressure outside of that environment. Possible outcomes could include misdiagnosis and unnecessary medical treatments.

According to a study involving 64,000 participants, individuals who have untreated white-coat hypertension face a 36% increased risk of experiencing a heart attack, stroke, or other heart-related events. Their risk of mortality due to heart disease was elevated. However, the research indicated that individuals who were taking medication for high blood pressure and solely experienced high blood pressure during medical appointments did not exhibit an increased likelihood of developing heart disease. It is essential to



accurately diagnose and manage white-coat hypertension in order to decrease cardiovascular risks. The research findings were published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Healthcare professionals should be aware of white coat syndrome and take steps to minimise its impact on blood pressure measurements.

Tips for dealing with white coat syndrome:

- Overcoming anxiety and getting accurate blood pressure readings. To ease worries about medical visits, it is important to openly communicate

with your healthcare provider. Let your doctor know about any anxiety or fear you have to build trust and ensure personalised healthcare. Experts recommend discussing stress with your healthcare provider to help manage its impact on blood pressure.

- Relaxation techniques can help reduce anxiety during medical visits, experts say. Practising these techniques helps manage stress and create a calm environment during medical appointments. To find peace and reduce stress, experts suggest adding different techniques to your daily routine. Deep breathing, meditation, and calming music are effective for relaxation. By practising these methods, people can reduce stress and feel more calm.

- Monitoring blood pressure at home is a promising health management option. Monitor your blood pressure at home to better comprehend your levels outside of medical facilities. In healthcare, regular monitoring is essential for identifying patterns or trends. By recording and sharing vital data, individuals can provide their healthcare providers with useful information.

- Bringing a dependable companion to medical appointments can provide emotional support and alleviate anxiety. A companion can provide distraction from the clinical environment and solace and reassurance.

- Those who experience intense dread or anxiety about visiting the doctor should seek professional assistance. It can significantly impact their health and well-being. It is best to obtain support and direction from a mental health professional. There is help for anxiety. People can learn to effectively manage anxiety through counselling and therapy.

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Building strong bones: simple steps to protect your skeletal health

Taking care of your bones is crucial for maintaining overall health and preventing bone fractures. A bone fracture occurs when a bone breaks due to factors like falls, impacts, or excessive stress. Symptoms of a fracture include pain, swelling, bruising, and difficulty moving the affected area.

To better understand the genetic component of bone fractures, researchers have studied over 1.2 million individuals of European ancestry. Among the genes linked to bone fractures is MBL2, which encodes instructions to make a protein that helps the body fight infections.

Another gene associated with bone fractures is SOST, which plays a role in controlling bone growth and remodelling. While genetics can influence your risk of fractures, there are several lifestyle choices you can make to strengthen your bones and minimise the chances of injury.

Tips for strong bones:

Calcium-rich diet: Include foods rich in calcium, such as dairy products, almonds, broccoli, kale, canned salmon with bones, sardines, and soy products like tofu. Calcium is essential for bone strength.

Vitamin D: Ensure adequate vitamin D intake to help your body absorb calcium effectively. Good sources of vitamin D include oily fish (salmon, trout, whitefish, and tuna), mushrooms, eggs, fortified foods (milk and cereals), and exposure to sunlight.

Regular physical activity: Engage in weight-bearing exercises like walking, jogging, and climbing stairs. These activities stimulate bone growth, making your bones stronger and slowing down bone loss.

Avoid substance abuse: Quit smoking, as it weakens bones and increases fracture risk. If you're a woman, limit alcohol consumption to one drink per day; for men, it is best to have no more than two drinks daily.

Coping through calories: the powerful link between emotions and eating

RAISA MEHZABEEN

Some days are upsetting. Perhaps for a reason or for no reason at all. How can I overcome this bad feeling? To forget this feeling, people often turn to food. This is called emotional eating. To ease work stress, financial problems, and relationship tensions, people turn to comforting foods for various negative emotions. This appetite is not like a physical one. It is about our brain, not our stomach.

Why this emotional eating?

As the name implies, this problem is related to emotions. Researchers have identified some of the factors that affect emotional eating. These are -

Stress: When you suffer from stress, the body starts producing a stress hormone called cortisol, and the effect of that cortisol awakens in the brain a strong desire to eat sweet, salty, or fried food.

Emotion relief: Eat to get rid of the burden of various negative emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, loneliness, shame, etc.

To get rid of boredom: Many people resort to emotional eating to get rid of the deep dissatisfaction and depression in their minds by eating delicious food.

Childhood habits: Many parents reward their children for good deeds with food. Many parents tend to cook sweets and ice cream if they get good results or to give up any bad habits. In this way, the matter of food is associated with those happy childhood memories. So many people who suffer from nostalgia or want to get back to their childhood happiness want to get back to the old days by eating those foods.

Relationship between emotional eating and diet:

Emotional eating usually refers to a condition in which someone is hungry or feels hungry all the time.

It has a deep relationship with diet. If your diet is high in carbohydrates and low in protein and fat, which reduces our appetite, then the amount of insulin in the blood increases. As a result, you will continue to feel hungry again and again.

When a person sleeps less, the amount of Ghrelin hormone in their blood increases, which increases the feeling of hunger in the body, and the amount of leptin hormone, which reduces the feeling of hunger, decreases. Water keeps our stomachs full and reduces hunger.

Many people mistake the feeling of thirst for water with the feeling of hunger and eat more. This is especially the case with children. Eating more fibrous foods releases the hormone satiety. As a result, the feeling of hunger decreases. If there is less fibre in your diet, you get hungry quickly.

The habit of reading books, looking at mobile phones, being busy at work, etc. during meals disrupts our food satisfaction. As a result, hunger is felt quickly. If someone eats liquid food all day, such as soups, juices, smoothies, etc., then they will often feel hungry.

Eating food slowly and chewing it more often gives more time to the body and brain. The body produces anti-hunger hormones, so you will feel satisfied and less hungry. The opposite happens when you eat fast food.

How to control emotional eating:

- Relieve Negative Emotions in a healthy way
- Exercise
- Yoga
- Write down what you are eating
- Eat a balanced and nutritious diet regularly
- Avoid unhealthy foods
- Keep track of how much you eat
- Focus on food, not anything else
- Seek expert help

The SunSmart Global UV App helps protect you from the dangers of the sun and promotes public health

STAR HEALTH DESK

A new app for mobile phones that provides localised information on ultraviolet (UV) radiation levels has been launched by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The SunSmart Global UV app provides five-day UV and weather forecasts at searchable locations. It highlights time slots when sun protection is required with the aim of helping people around the world know when to use sun protection in an effort to reduce the global burden of skin cancer and UV-related eye damage.

The SunSmart Global UV app is available free of charge at both the Apple App and Google Play stores. It provides personalised options so that users can take actions to protect themselves from prolonged, excessive UV exposure, a major cause of skin cancer and other UV-related diseases.

Globally, it is estimated that over 1.5 million cases of skin cancer (melanoma and non-melanoma combined) were diagnosed in 2020. During the same period, more than 120,000 people across the world lost their lives to this highly preventable disease. One of the main factors contributing to these cancers is excess UV radiation from the thinning of the earth's stratospheric ozone layer resulting from the release of certain manmade chemicals.

Much of the UV-related illness and death can be avoided through a set of simple prevention measures:

- Limit time in the midday sun.
- Seek shade when UV rays are most intense.
- Wear protective clothing, hats, and sunglasses.
- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen for sun protection.
- Protecting children from extended periods in the sun is particularly important, as excessive sun exposure during these early years can significantly increase the risk of UV-related diseases later in life.



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