

# What Does Weight Have to Do With Rheumatoid Arthritis?

Obesity can lead to rapid progression of this autoimmune condition, and unintentional weight loss may signal a worsening of the condition.

May 1, 2018 By [Alicia Green](#)

---

Currently 1.5 million people are living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) in the United States. Now, findings published in the journal *Arthritis Care & Research* reveal that the condition advances more quickly and worsens for individuals who are very obese, reports [HealthDay](#). Additionally, unintended weight loss among those who were already thin indicates increasing frailty and an increased risk for new disability.

For the [study](#), researchers assessed the association between obesity and weight loss and worsening disability among more than 25,000 patients with RA listed in the National Data of Rheumatic Diseases and the Veterans Affairs RA registry.

Scientists discovered that disability scores were higher among patients who were very obese versus those who were overweight. In addition, this same group showed a greater risk of progressive disability. Similarly, people who were already thin and experienced unintended weight loss became disabled more rapidly.

“This study suggests that patients with rheumatoid arthritis and obesity would benefit from intentional weight loss through a comprehensive management strategy,” said Joshua Baker, MD, MSCE, an assistant professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania’s Perelman School of Medicine and author of the study.

Although researchers could not prove causality, they concluded that strategies aimed at healthy weight management could help reduce disability among obese people with RA and that strength training and physical therapy could help more frail individuals.

[Click here](#) to learn how opioids and antidepressants are linked to higher fracture risk in rheumatoid arthritis patients.

---