

### Preventing cartilage loss may not prevent pain



There is a weak relationship between cartilage thinning and knee pain worsening.

#### INTRODUCTION

Osteoarthritis is a common condition that makes a person's joints stiff and painful, particularly in the morning. It is caused by thinning of the cartilage within the joints, which allows the bones to rub against each other. Joint swelling and pain are frequent symptoms.

Researchers have been working to develop treatments that both protect against cartilage loss and relieve joint pain. It had been thought that slowing cartilage loss would help to relieve pain, but a recent trial of a drug that appeared to work to slow cartilage loss did not have any effect on pain.

#### WHAT DID THE AUTHORS HOPE TO FIND?

The authors wanted to find out whether cartilage loss would be accompanied by worse knee pain.

#### WHO WAS STUDIED?

The study looked at 600 men and women in the US. Everyone was aged between 45–79, and either already had osteoarthritis in their knees, or was at risk of developing it.

#### HOW WAS THE STUDY CONDUCTED?

This study used an existing database of medical records. The people taking part filled out a survey on knee pain and had MRIs of their knees every year. The authors used this information to work out the cartilage loss over 2 years. They then examined the relationship between cartilage loss and changes in the knee pain that people reported.

#### WHAT WERE THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY?

The authors found that people with thinning cartilage did report worsening pain. However, the main finding was that cartilage loss was not strongly associated with knee pain. This suggests that taking a drug to prevent cartilage loss would not have much of an effect on knee pain.

#### ARE THESE FINDINGS NEW?

Yes.

#### WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY?

The study has some limitations, which means we have to be careful in how we interpret the information. For example, the results might not be relevant for a treatment that directly treats both cartilage loss and knee pain. It would be relevant for a treatment that prevents cartilage loss but has no direct effect on knee pain.

#### WHAT DO THE AUTHORS PLAN ON DOING WITH THIS INFORMATION?

There are no more studies planned. This information will be shared in the scientific community and help doctors to understand the relationship between cartilage loss and knee pain in people with osteoarthritis.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

If you have osteoarthritis in your knees, treatments that are being developed to treat cartilage loss might not be helpful for you.

If you have any questions about your disease or its treatment, talk to your doctor.

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