Is There a Relationship Between Diabetes and Painful Musculoskeletal Conditions?

Findings show that people with diabetes are more likely to suffer from two common types of arthritis and osteoporosis.

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More than 100 million Americans currently live with diabetes or prediabetes, higher than normal blood sugar levels. Now, new findings presented at the European Association for the Study of Diabetes Annual Meeting suggest that folks with this chronic disorder face an increased risk of arthritis and osteoporosis, Medical News Today reports.

For the study, researchers at the Nordsjaellands University Hospital in Denmark used the records of more than 100,000 Danish citizens age 40 and older to further understand the link between diabetes, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and osteoporosis.

Scientists noted that most of the 8.5 percent of individuals diagnosed with diabetes were older males with a higher body mass index (BMI), the ratio of height to weight. After controlling for age, gender and BMI, researchers found that those with diabetes were 70 percent more likely to have rheumatoid arthritis.

In addition, these individuals also showed an increased risk for osteoarthritis (33 percent) and osteoporosis (29 percent). What's more, those with diabetes complained about instances of back, shoulder and neck pain more frequently than those without the condition.

Researchers believe the most pronounced association between rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes can be attributed to the chronic inflammation that accompanies both conditions. Additionally, steroids used to treat this form of arthritis can increase the risk of type 2 diabetes.

Moreover, the chronic pain suffered by those with arthritis can make it difficult to exercise, thus boosting the risk of diabetes.

Scientists said they hope these findings help doctors guide their patients accordingly. "Health care professionals should make patients with diabetes aware that regular exercise is a recognized treatment for diabetes and arthritis and can have positive effects on both blood sugar control as

well as musculoskeletal pain," said Stig Molsted, PhD, a senior researcher at the hospital and the study's lead researcher.

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