

## **Baby Boomers and Arthritis: Increasing Arthritis Linked to Higher Obesity Rates**

**Unfortunately, baby boomers are more obese, longer, than their parents were**

Arthritis Treatment Shoulder Arthritis Arthritis Hands Obesity Diet Obesity Exercise  
Researchers at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC), an affiliate of Harvard Medical School, discovered that baby boomers have significantly higher rates of arthritis than their parents' generation.

And being overweight may play a contributing role.

### **Baby Boomers Spent More Years Being Obese**

The BIDMC study, published in the September issue of the American Journal of Public Health, found that baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, have significantly higher rates of obesity when compared to their parents, the "silent generation," born 1926 through 1942.

Researchers report that obesity also increased for baby boomers at a younger age than the previous generation, and as a result baby boomers have spent more years living with obesity than the previous generation.

"We found that the obesity epidemic has affected both the baby-boomers and their predecessors but that the baby-boomers got a much earlier start, and have spent more of their lives in an obese state even though we've known that they have had better access to nutrition and information about exercise for much of their lives," says Suzanne Leveille, PhD, senior author of the study, in a news release from BIDMC.

### **Arthritis Increasing in Baby Boomers**

The study also reports a higher rate of obesity-related arthritis among baby boomers compared to the previous generation, although researchers point out that it may be too early to determine if this will lead to a rise in arthritis rates.

The study found that arthritis *risk* soared along with the obesity rates of the baby-boomers.

Arthritis cases attributed to obesity rose from 3 percent to 18 percent between 1971 and 2002. This increase can be caused by many factors, including the way physicians diagnose arthritis over time, but researchers say the rise in obesity cannot be ignored.

"Baby-boomers are just approaching the age when arthritis rates begin to rise dramatically. Many baby-boomers have lived with obesity for much of their lives. We can expect to see the health and functional consequences of this epidemic in the coming decades," says Leveille.

“Public health strategies to address obesity and arthritis management could have a major impact on the lives of aging baby-boomers in the years to come.”

### **About the Study**

The BIDMC study was supported by grants from the Arthritis Foundation, the National Bureau of Economics Research, the National Institute on Aging and the Lasker Foundation. Researchers used data collected by the US Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics. The researchers explored the 1980 to 2000 decennial censuses and the results from the 1971 to 2002 National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys.

Source: By Sharon O'Brien, About.com Guide