

NORTH SHORE

Program helps tackle joint pain

Weight-loss initiative aids osteoarthritis patients

Cassandra Briedis

FOR osteoarthritis sufferers, every kilogram of body weight quadruples the pressure put on knee joints.

Wahroonga resident and keen golfer Grainger McFarlane, 65, was shocked to discover his osteoarthritis had deteriorated to the point where during a long-anticipated golfing trip to China, he couldn't even manage to walk the course.

"At the time, I was carrying a bit of weight," Mr McFarlane said.

After returning to Australia and having keyhole operations on both knees, and with the likelihood of a future knee replacement, he was told about a program designed to help patients enjoy a more active lifestyle.

The Osteoarthritis Healthy Weight For Life research program, co-authored by Royal North Shore Hospital rheumatologist Professor David Hunter, found that people with knee osteoarthritis who were

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Patient Grainger McFarlane

overweight could experience significantly increased improvement in their daily joint pain and stiffness with a loss of 5 to 10 per cent of their weight.

Mr McFarlane signed up as a participant in the hope it would help him better manage symptoms.

"When I started the program in January last year, I was 111kg and I'm currently 95kg," Mr McFarlane said.

The program, which ran over 18 weeks, involved a complete review of his lifestyle, guidance on low-impact exercise activities, as well as nutritional advice.

"The beauty of this program is that it is very simply laid out and allows you to work through a series of activities at your own pace to improve mobility and strength," he said.

"To do it effectively, you have to have a level of self motivation and a goal at the end. For me, it was to be able to walk around a golf course."

• To find out if you're eligible for the program, see your GP or visit oa.hwfl.com.au

Royal North Shore Hospital head of rheumatology Professor David Hunter and patient Grainger McFarlane. Picture: Adam Ward

