



Gout

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What is Gout?

Have you been awakened at night by a hot, painful feeling in your big toe or ankle? Did the painful joint appear swollen and red (inflamed)? These can be symptoms of a gout attack. Gout is a disease that affects the joints. Left untreated, it can lead to a painful foot deformity and even kidney problems. The good news is that by treating gout early, you can relieve pain and help prevent future problems. Gout can usually be treated with medication and proper diet. In severe cases, surgery may be needed.



What Causes Gout?

Gout is caused by an excess of uric acid (a waste product made by the body). The uric acid forms crystals that collect in the joints, bringing on a gout attack. If you have many gout attacks, crystals may form large deposits called tophi. Tophi can damage joints and cause deformity.

Who is at Risk for Gout?

Men are more likely to have gout than women. But women can also be affected, mostly after menopause. Some health problems, such as obesity and high cholesterol, make gout more likely. And some medications, such as diuretics (water pills), can trigger a gout attack. People who drink a lot of alcohol are at high risk for gout. Certain foods can also trigger a gout attack.

Foods That Trigger a Gout Attack

- Organ meats (kidney, liver, sweetbread)
- Shellfish (lobster, crab, shrimp, scallop, mussel)
- Certain fish (anchovy, sardine, herring, mackerel)
- Alcohol (beer, red wine)
- Certain Meats (red meat , processed meat , turkey)

Physical Exam

Your doctor will ask you questions about where and how often you feel pain. He or she will also ask about your diet , medications, and how much alcohol you drink. Your doctor will examine your feet for signs of gout. Signs include redness, heat and swelling.

Tests

X-rays may be taken to check for tophi or changes in your bones, if needed, your doctor may use a syringe to take some fluid from your joint. This fluid will be analyzed for uric crystals. Your doctor may also take a blood sample to look for uric acid.

Treating Gout Attacks

Gout attacks are painful and often happen more than once. Taking medications may reduce pain and prevent attacks in the future. There are also some things you can do at home to relieve symptoms.

Medications

Your doctor may prescribe a daily long-term control medication to reduce levels of uric acid. This may help prevent gout attacks. Other medications can help relieve pain and swelling during an attack. Be sure to take your medication as directed.

What You Can Do

Below are some things you can do at home to relieve gout symptoms.

Your doctor may have other tips.

- Rest the painful joint as much as you can.
- Raise the painful joint so it is at a level higher than your heart.

Preventing Gout

With a little effort, you may be able to prevent gout attacks in the future.

Here are some things you can do:

- Avoid alcohol and foods that trigger gout
- Take any long-term control medications prescribed by your doctor.
- Lose weight if you need to.
- Control blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Drink plenty of water to help flush uric acid from your body.