

Gout

What is Gout?

Gout is an inflammatory arthritis that is caused by the crystallization of uric acid in the joints, causing inflammation. Gout is very painful. Recurring gout attacks can cause permanent joint damage.

New evidence suggests that gout is linked to the metabolic syndrome (increased risk of heart disease), hypertension (high blood pressure), kidney stones, obesity, dyslipidemia (abnormal concentration of fat/lipids in the blood) and could increase a person's risk of a heart attack, diabetes, and premature death. Most people living with chronic gout can control it with medication.

Early diagnosis lowers your chances of developing destructive joint disease.

Lifestyle changes are an important part of treatment and can also prevent and manage many of the associated conditions of gout.

DID YOU KNOW?

Gout occurs more often in men than women. It is estimated that up to 2% of men over age 30 and women over age 50 will develop gout at some time.

WHAT CAUSES GOUT?

1. Many dietary and lifestyle factors can contribute to the development of gout. These include eating purine-rich foods such as red meat and seafood. Drinking sugar sweetened soft drinks and alcoholic drinks like beer can also lead to gout. Gout is the only type of arthritis that can be substantially controlled by changing your diet and lifestyle.
2. People who are overweight and / or obese have an increased risk of having gout; losing weight can decrease the risk of gout.
3. After menopause the chance of women developing gout is higher. Estrogen, which is known to lower uric acid levels, decreases in the body putting this demographic at a greater risk.
4. A parental history of gout can contribute to the risk of gout. Rare, genetic metabolism disorders and kidney abnormalities can cause gout.
5. Research suggests the gene that transports uric acid in the body can slow down or block the kidney's ability to filter uric acid from the bloodstream. Depending on which form of gene one person has inherited, they can have an increased risk of developing gout.
6. Certain medical conditions lead to gout. They include diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure), carrying too much fat around the abdomen, decreased kidney function, and metabolic syndrome (increased risk of heart disease).
7. Specific medications can also contribute to the risk of gout. They include water pills used for hypertension and heart failure, low-dose aspirin used for heart disease prevention, and certain medications used after organ transplants.

TRENDS IN GOUT

There is evidence which indicates that there has been a worldwide increase in the frequency of gout and this may be driven by changes in diet and lifestyle.

People who have moved to westernized countries, with more inactive lifestyles and "westernized" diets, have a greater risk of developing gout and elevated uric acid levels (hyperuricemia) than those who remain in their native countries. Although some research may suggest that dietary factors and others associated with western lifestyle are not responsible for an increased risk of gout, data still shows that the incidence of gout has doubled in the past 20 years.

TYPES OF GOUT

1. Acute Gout

This type of gout usually involves one joint to a few joints. Attacks may begin at night. Acute gout may be triggered by a purine-rich diet, alcohol use, some medications, surgery, heart attacks, and trauma. Affected joints are usually red, swollen and tender. Early attacks usually subside after three to 10 days with some skin peeling away from the affected joint. Without proper treatment, you may have an attack that lasts longer. Over 50% of individuals who have had an acute gout attack will have a recurrence within a year. Over time the attacks may become more frequent, last longer, and involve more joints.



For example: You may go to bed in good health. During the night, you wake up due to sharp pain, usually in the big toe, but sometimes in the heel, ankle or instep. The pain and sensation are so acute that you cannot tolerate the weight of a bed sheet on your toe. You toss and turn during the night but to no avail, the pain is persistent and intense.

The joint that is most commonly affected first is located at the base of the big toe. Almost any joint can be affected, but the joints of the lower limbs are more often involved. Gout can also affect the bursa and tendons, causing large soft tissue swelling under the elbow joint. The soft tissues overlying the joint can become red, hot and swollen which does not occur in most other forms of arthritis. The swelling can eventually affect the whole foot and ankle, and wearing a regular shoe over the inflamed toe may become impossible.

2. Chronic Gout

In some cases, attacks linger on, and the disease becomes chronic with persisting inflammation (Intercritical gout). The uric acid crystals deposit in and around the joint, leading to destruction of the joint and soft tissues. After many years of gout attacks, some people enter the most disabling stage. The inflammation caused by uric acid crystals deposited within and around the joint continues to be ongoing and destructive. This is called chronic arthritis (Tophaceous gout). With proper medical attention and treatment most people will not progress to this advanced stage.

HOW DOES YOUR DOCTOR DIAGNOSE GOUT?

The nature of the attack and the involved joints provide the key to diagnosis. Blood tests will usually reveal an abnormally high level of uric acid. Having a higher level of uric acid in the blood only does not mean you have gout. Many people with elevated levels of uric acid do not develop gout. A diagnosis is made by inserting a needle into the joint and taking a sample of fluid which, when examined properly, reveals the classic appearance of uric acid crystals.

HEALTHY EATING AND GOUT RISK	
Increases Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Red meat• Butter• Seafood• Poultry• Eggs• Sugar-sweetened soda• Beer & liquor	Decreases Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daily exercise• Weight control• Low-fat dairy products• Multi-vitamins• Coffee• Cooking food in plant oils

HOW CAN I TREAT GOUT?

The goals of gout treatment are to:

1. Provide relief of acute attacks
2. Prevent further attacks
3. Prevent damage to the joints
4. Prevent and manage the complications associated with gout

Preventative measures include, but are not limited to, lifestyle modifications which can prevent gout attacks as well as associated conditions.

Your doctor may recommend both medicine and non-medicinal therapies for gout. Treatment for acute attacks includes rest, ice, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), colchicine, and cortisone.

Based on the frequency of gout attacks, and other medical factors, your physician will determine which medication is appropriate for you. Allopurinol is a type of medication that is commonly used to lower uric acid levels. Blood tests are required every so often to measure your levels of uric acid. The goal is to lower your uric acid level to a normal range in order to prevent recurring gout attacks. Be sure to discuss all management techniques with your doctor.

Revised 04/08 --- By Hyon Choi,MD,DrPH, FRCPC

HOW CAN YOU FIGHT GOUT?

Call The Arthritis Society

This toll-free number can connect you with trained volunteers who can provide you with support and information.

1.800.321.1433

Join the Free Arthritis Registry

You will receive specific information you need to manage your arthritis and improve your quality of life.

www.arthritis.ca/registry

Enroll in the Arthritis Self-Management Program (ASMP)

ASMP is a six-week program for people living with arthritis, their family and friends. Trained leaders with first hand experience of arthritis lead the weekly small, interactive two-hour workshops. Program participants will gain self-confidence in their ability to control symptoms, learn how to develop action plans to manage how arthritis affects their lives, and make connections with others living with arthritis.

www.arthritis.ca/asmp

Use Arthritis Friendly Products

The Arthritis Society is proud to be able to recognize manufacturers that have designed products that are easy to use for people living with arthritis. For a complete list of products that have been commended by The Arthritis Society and deemed "Arthritis Friendly" visit

www.arthritis.ca/arthritisfriendly.

More Information About Gout

The influences of lifestyle on the risk for gout are displayed within a recent Harvard Healthy Eating Pyramid; following these recommendations (e.g. weight loss, healthy diet, and vitamin intake) may help you achieve the best overall outcome managing your gout. To view the pyramid and other references, please visit

www.arthritis.ca/goutfactsheet/references

ARTHRITIS  FIGHT IT!

To support arthritis research or to learn more, contact The Arthritis Society:
1.800.321.1433 www.arthritis.ca


The Arthritis Society