

## What is Gout? Know How to Prevent & Manage Gout Attacks



## What is Gout?

**Gout** is a disease caused by too much uric acid in the body. When uric acid builds up, they form sharp, needle-like crystals in the joint or nearby tissue. The result is an attack of pain, tenderness and swelling in the joint especially in the big toe.

These painful attacks can happen many times. Over time, they can damage nerves and joints, and cause kidney stones and kidney problems.

## Who Can Get Gout?

- If other members of your family have gout, you're more likely to get it.
- Men, particularly between the ages of 40 and 50, are more likely to get gout than women. In women, gout tends to occur after menopause.
- People who eat too many foods high in levels of a chemical called purine are at risk for gout. High purine foods include beef, pork, and organ meats (e.g., liver, kidney)
- People who drink too much alcohol.
- People who are overweight.
- Some health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol can increase the risk of gout.
- Using certain medicines such as medicine for high blood pressure and aspirin can also increase the risk of gout.

## What Causes Gout Attacks?

An attack may happen for no obvious reason, but there are a few known causes or triggers of gout attacks. These include:

- Eating too many foods high in purines such as liver, kidney, intestine, salmon, and sardines.
- Drinking too much alcohol.
- Taking medicines that raise or quickly lower uric acid levels.
- Some other causes include: stress or stressful events, joint injury, infection or illness, surgery, very low calorie diets, and some forms of cancer treatment.

## How Can I Prevent Gout Attacks?

If you have gout, see your doctor. Ask your doctor about a treatment plan and follow it even when you do not have gout attacks.

The suggestions below may help you prevent or reduce the pain of an attack:

### **Stick to a healthy, well-balanced diet.**

Avoid alcohol, especially beer. Avoid foods that are high in purines, such as organ meats and some types of seafood. See “Gout and Diet” for more information about the effect of certain foods on gout.

### **Exercise regularly and stick to a healthy body weight.**

If you are overweight, lose weight slowly and gradually.



**Alcohol, especially beer, can set off painful gout attacks**



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### **Work with your doctor.**

- Tell your doctor about the medicines and vitamins you take, including natural or herbal supplements. Your doctor will tell you if they increase your risk of gout attacks.

- Your doctor may prescribe medicine that can help lower uric acid levels. Carefully follow the instructions about how much medicine to take and when to take it.

## If a gout attack still comes, here are some tips to help you get through it:

### **See your doctor as soon as possible.**

Certain medicines work better when they are given earlier in a gout attack.

### **Rest up.**

Your doctor may suggest bed rest during your attack and for a day afterwards. Too much activity too soon may make another attack more likely.

### **Use ice carefully.**

Be sure to ask your doctor about the best way to apply an ice pack, including how long to apply it during one session.



## Gout and Diet

About half of the uric acid in our bodies comes from purines which are found in the foods we eat. Purines are broken down by our bodies into uric acid. Too many purines can result in high uric acid levels in the body.

People with gout should avoid foods that are high in purines.

See the list of foods on the next page that you should limit or avoid.

### Tips

- Drink a lot of liquids, especially water. Fluids help remove uric acid from the body.
- Adding low-fat dairy products into your diet can also help protect you from gout.



**Know which foods are high in purines and which foods are not.**

**Do not eat foods high in purines.**

### Avoid high purine level foods

- **Organ meats:** liver, kidney, heart, brain, intestine
- **Fish/ shellfish:** salmon, mussels, mackerel, sardines, anchovies, herring, caviar

### Limit medium purine level foods

- **Game meats:** goose, veal, duck, pigeon
- **Meats:** black chicken, beef, lamb, pork, chicken
- **Vegetables:** asparagus, cauliflower, mushroom, spinach, green peas
- **Beverages:** beer and other alcoholic drinks
- **Soup:** meat-based soups, stock cubes, meat gravies
- **Other foods:** tofu, beans, lentils

### Enjoy low purine level foods

- Carbonated drinks such as soda, ginger ale, root beer
- Fruits, tomatoes and some types of green vegetables, such as kale, broccoli, bok choy
- Refined cereals, bread, pasta, rice and grains
- Cheese, dairy products and eggs
- Coffee, sugar, chocolate, and olives

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