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Gout

KEY POINTS

- Gout is a painful type of arthritis that usually affects one joint at a time, often the big toe.
- It causes periods of severe pain and swelling in the affected joint, called flares.
- There are treatments to reduce gout symptoms during a flare.
- People can also prevent or reduce flares by changing their diet and other lifestyle behaviors or taking medicines.



Overview

Gout basics

- Gout is a painful type of arthritis that usually affects one joint at a time.
- When your body has extra uric acid (a normal body waste product), crystals can form in a joint and cause severe pain and swelling.
- Symptoms of gout may come and go.

Gout flares

- When gout symptoms get bad, this is called a flare.
- A person may experience sudden symptoms that last for days or weeks.
- Then, there may be periods without any symptoms (called remissions), before the next flare.
- Over time, if left untreated:
 - Flares may happen more often and last longer.
 - Lumps called tophi stones may form. Tophi stones are caused by uncontrolled uric acid levels. They can become painful and damage joints.

Signs and symptoms

People with gout may have symptoms in the affected joint, such as:

- Pain.
- Swelling.
- Redness.
- Heat.



High uric acid levels can form painful crystals around a joint.

Things that increase risk of gout

Certain things can increase the body's levels of uric acid, which may lead to gout. These include:

- Obesity.
- Certain medicines, such as water pills (or diuretics).
- Foods and drinks that are high in purines (a chemical compound that the body turns into uric acid) such as:
 - Alcohol.
 - Sugary drinks.
 - Sugary foods, like snacks with high fructose corn syrup.
 - Red meat and shellfish.

Who gets gout

Anyone can get gout. But it is more common in certain groups of people, including:

- Men.
- People with a family history of gout.
- People with health conditions like:
 - Heart failure.
 - High blood pressure.
 - Insulin resistance.
 - Diabetes.
 - Poor kidney function.

Diagnosis

Finding out if you have gout

It is important to be diagnosed with gout early so you can start treating it quickly.

- Since gout symptoms can look like other diseases, a doctor should diagnose it.
- Gout is typically diagnosed during a flare, when it is easiest to spot uric acid crystals in the affected joint.
- Not everyone with high uric acid levels will develop gout.

A doctor will diagnose gout by doing:

- A physical exam.
- X-rays.
- Lab tests.
- A review of your health history.

Find a rheumatologist near you

Rheumatologists are doctors who specialize in gout and other types of arthritis. For a list of rheumatologists in your area, click on the locator below. Then filter by country and state.

[American College of Rheumatology locator](#) ↗

Managing gout

Treatment

Talk to your health care provider about:

- Prescription and over-the-counter drugs, like ibuprofen and acetaminophen, to reduce pain and swelling during a flare.
- Prescription drugs to lower uric acid levels and prevent flares and tophi stones.

Self-care for gout

In addition to medications, there are things you can do on your own to help manage gout.

- Be [physically active](#)—for at least 150 minutes per week at moderate-intensity.
- Limit foods and drinks that are high in purines. These include:
 - Alcohol, especially beer and hard liquor.
 - Sugary foods and drinks.
 - Red meats and organ meats.
 - Certain seafood, like anchovies, sardines, mussels, scallops, trout, and tuna.

Learn more about [self-care strategies](#) and programs for arthritis, which can also help with gout. Local and remote [programs](#) are available.



Eating foods that are low in purines is important for gout management.

Resources

- [Rheumatologist Provider Directory](#)
- [American College of Rheumatology](#)
- [National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases](#)
- [Medline Plus](#)

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

[National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion \(NCCDPHP\)](#)