

GOUT

FACTS:

- ◆ Gout is one the most painful forms of arthritis. It occurs when too much uric acid builds up in the body (tiny crystals deposit in joints & soft tissue).
- ◆ There is **no real cure for gout**. Treatment is aimed at controlling symptoms and preventing future attacks.
- ◆ All humans and different cultures can be impacted by gout. However, it is rarely seen in **men before adolescence or women before menopause. Men are at higher risk** of developing gout than women. About 25% of gout sufferers have a family history of the condition (genetics).
- ◆ Elevated uric acid levels do not always means that a person has gout. Uric acid levels **can be normal** during a gout attack. Most accurate way to diagnose gout is by looking for **crystals in the joint fluid**.
- ◆ Gout attacks can be brought on by stressful events, certain drugs (thiazide diuretics; low dose aspirin; cyclosporine, levodopa or some antibiotics), **alcohol**, another illness or by taking the **vitamin niacin**.
- ◆ **Foods high in purine** (a basic building block of DNA) content should be avoided by anyone at risk for a gout attack. The body metabolizes purine and produces uric acid as a waste product.
- ◆ Early gout attacks usually get better **within 3 to 10 days**, even without treatment. The early the intervention the better the results.
- ◆ Gout can damage the kidneys if left unchecked. 10-25% of primary gout sufferers (no known reason for high uric acid) and 42% of secondary gout sufferers (result of some underlying disorder) will develop kidney stones.

TREATMENT:

Traditional medicines used to treat **acute attacks** of gout include:

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen, naproxen or indomethacin.

Corticosteroids, such as prednisone.

The old and now very expensive **Colchicine**, which works best when taken within the first 12 hours of an acute attack.

To help **prevent future attacks**, doctors often prescribe NSAIDs or colchicine in small daily doses or daily doses of **allopurinol** to help reduce the production of uric acid.

Non-traditional and natural medicine treatment options include:

Excessive uric acid can develop in the body due to a state known as acidosis, where the **body's pH is too acidic** (ideal blood pH level is 7.35 or slightly alkaline; 7.0 is neutral: below 7 is acidic and above 7 is alkaline; pH level can be easily tested by low cost Litmus paper (urine or saliva).

Mixing lemon juice and baking soda together creates a nearly perfect pH of 7 and may stop a gout attack immediately by alkalizing the blood. Pour 2 tablespoonful of lemon juice (mildly acidic and high in potassium & citrate) in a glass with 1/2 teaspoonful of baking soda (highly alkaline; caution: use of baking soda **could raise blood pressure**). Allow the mix to foam and fizz until it is flat - about 2 minutes. Then add 8oz. water and drink immediately.

Black cherries (tart cherries) contain natural anti-oxidants and anti-inflammatories that help neutralize uric acid in the bloodstream. Cherry juice supplements and black cherry concentrate (10 to 15 cherries a day or the juice equivalent) can be taken daily or at the time of the attack to reduce the length and severity of the episode.

A natural sulfur supplement (**MSM** or Methyl Sulfonyl Methane) is often taken by gout sufferers alone or with cherry juice to help repair connective tissue and to reduce pain and inflammation. MSM (in either pill or powder form) takes a few weeks to months to build up to optimum levels in the body.

Old cultures have long used an **Apple Cider Vinegar formula** daily to manage gout or during an acute gout attack. Add 1 tablespoonful of raw honey to 1 or more tablespoonful of warm distilled water. Then mix with 1 tablespoonful of Apple Cider Vinegar and drink twice a day after meals.

PREVENTION:

Drink 8 glasses of water a day to remain hydrated. Water can dilute the uric acid levels in the body and therefore reduce the chances of crystals forming. **Increase to 16 glasses of water daily during an attack.**

Keep yourself warm. Exposure to cold weather is a direct trigger of gout and the resulting buildup of uric acid crystals.

Avoid alcoholic beverages especially during an acute attack. Alcohol tends to thin the blood and complicates the healing of the joint damage that is caused by the uric acid crystal formation. Also, your body requires high levels of uric acid in order to digest alcohol.

Test your blood pH often. Try to maintain an alkaline pH. Excessive intake of tea, coffee, alcohol, carbonated drinks, protein, vitamin C, aspirin and foods that have high chlorine, sulfur or phosphorus can lower the bodies pH levels. Uric acid is then more soluble in the blood and gout attacks are more likely.

Keep your immune system strong. Take a multi-vitamin supplement daily with high dose vitamin C (try to avoid **niacin**). Some studies suggest that 70 mg. of folic acid daily can help lower uric acid levels.

Control what you eat. Speak with a dietitian for tips. Keep a journal to help identify what specific foods may be triggering your gout attacks.

Eat a moderate amount of protein from healthy sources like eggs, tofu and other low fat sources. Increase your intake of dark fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, peanut butter, pudding, rice, pasta, gelatin, coffee/most teas, foods with vitamin C, and fat-free milk products

Try to avoid foods that are high in purine content especially during an acute attack. **Red and dark meats** including turkey and sausages require high levels of uric acid to digest. **Many fish foods** can cause major problems including shellfish, salmon, trout, herring, fish roe and dark fillet. Poultry can cause problems and so can beans, peas, asparagus and spinach.

Exercising regularly and keeping excess weight off is essential to preventing acute gout attacks. By consistently moving and straining your joints you can break up uric acid crystals before they get too big and cause major attacks. Gout is more prevalent in the obese and overweight.

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10 Old Route 213, Suites A & B – High Falls, NY. 12440

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