

Patient information

Diet and Gout

Dietetics - Therapies Department

Name:

Date:

Dietitian:

What is gout?

Gout is a type of arthritis that can result in painful attacks in the joints of the foot, knee, ankle, hand, and wrist. Most commonly gout can affect the big toe.

How is gout caused?

A chemical called uric acid causes gout. If there is too much uric acid circulating in the body it can form crystals, which are deposited in joints or under the skin. When these deposits are in joints it can cause intense pain (gout).

High levels of uric acid can be inherited or can be caused by some drugs, such as water tablets and immunosuppressants, or kidney disease. If untreated, repeated attacks of gout can lead to damage of the joints and cause arthritis, however treatment can usually prevent this developing.

What role does diet have in preventing and treating gout?

Healthy eating

Eating a balanced diet is an important part of maintaining good health. A balanced diet should include:

- Aim for five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.
- Aim to have some starchy carbohydrate at your meals, include whole grains and higher fibre varieties.
- Ensure you eat no more than two servings of protein per day (meat, fish or vegetable alternatives)
- Choose lower fat dairy products.
- Eat less fat, sugar, and salt.

Limit sugary foods/sweetened foods.

Eating and drinking these foods on a regular basis can lead to weight gain and obesity. Additionally, sugary foods, drinks and snacks often contain fructose or what might be labelled as high-fructose corn syrup/glucose-fructose syrup. A high intake of fructose can increase uric acid levels in the blood and may increase insulin resistance. These are both risk factors for developing gout, so aim to limit these foods.

As well as biscuits, cakes, sweets, fruit juices and sugary drinks, high-fructose corn syrup can be found in unexpected foods. These include:

- Bread.
- Yoghurts.
- Frozen pizzas.
- Cereals and cereal bars.
- Jarred sauces.
- Some condiments such as jams, ketchup, mayonnaise, or salad dressings.

Check labels to compare products and choose fresh ingredients rather than processed foods when possible.

Although fruit contains fructose it should not be limited. This is because fruit is not a concentrated form of fructose. When eaten whole it contains fibre, and protective vitamins and minerals such as potassium, vitamin C and other antioxidants, which are otherwise lost in processing.

Weight

Being overweight may contribute to high uric acid levels in your body. Gradual weight loss (e.g. 1-2 lbs/0.5-1kg per week) can be of benefit and will reduce stress on your joints. However, rapid weight loss, fasting or strict dieting may cause an increased rate of cell breakdown, which can cause urate levels to rise. A dietitian can advise you further on this.

Fluid

Increasing your fluid intake can help dilute your urine and keep uric acid levels down. You should aim to drink at least 2.5-3.5 litres (four to six pints) of fluid per day.

You can tell how diluted your urine is by looking at its colour. The darker your urine is, the more concentrated it is.

Your urine is usually a dark yellow colour in the morning because it contains a build-up of waste products that your body has produced overnight.

	Good
	Good
	Fair
	Dehydrated
	Dehydrated
	Very dehydrated
	Severe dehydration

Tips to help you maintain your fluid intake:

- Drink a large glass of water at specific times during the day, for example when you get up in the morning, and at several intervals throughout the day.
- Keep a large bottle of water or no added sugar diluting cordial/squash with you and sip from it throughout the day.
- Drink two glasses of fluid at each meal-one before and one after eating.

Alcohol

Too much alcohol has been linked with gout and many people report gout attacks follow quickly after a heavy drinking session. It is well established that binge drinking may trigger attacks in people who suffer with gout, even when they are taking medicines to prevent them.

It is thought that beer affects gout more than spirits or wine, however it is advisable to reduce your alcohol intake especially if you drink more than the government guidelines of:

- 14 units per week (two alcohol free days per week)

One unit of alcohol is provided by:

- ½ pint of standard strength beer, lager or cider
- 125ml glass of wine
- 25ml measure of spirits
- 50ml measure of sherry or fortified wine

Low Alcohol Beer

Although there have not been specific studies reviewing low alcohol beers on gout symptoms it seems probable that they are less likely to cause gout.

Purines

Uric acid is the waste product created when the body breaks down a substance called purines. Purines can come from your diet. Purines are part of a normal diet and cannot be avoided completely. Some people find that limiting the amount they take in through their diet can help keep them symptom free.

The following foods are high in purines and should be taken in moderation or avoided:

Fish sources	Meat sources	Other sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anchovies• Crab• Shrimps• Fish roe• Mackerel• Sardines• Herring• Whitebait• Eel• Mussels• Scallops	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liver• Heart• Kidney• Sweetbreads• Meat extract (e.g. Oxo, Bovril)• Goose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yeast extract (e.g. Marmite)• Asparagus• Cauliflower• Mushrooms• Beans, peas, lentils• Spinach• Quorn• Beer

Are there any 'good' foods for gout?

There is evidence, although limited to suggest that cherry juice can reduce uric acid in the blood as well as reduce the inflammation that occurs with gout.

There is also some evidence that taking additional vitamin C as a dietary supplement can reduce blood uric acid levels. If you are considering supplementing your diet, always discuss with your doctor as Vitamin supplements may interact with certain medications and are not suitable for some medical conditions e.g. kidney stones.

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Further information

Useful websites

UK Gout Society: www.ukgoutsociety.org

Royal Liverpool & Broadgreen Hospital Dietitians Tel: 0151 706 2120
Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2120

Aintree Hospital Dietitians Tel: 0151 529 3473
Text phone number: 18001 0151 529 3473

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