



Patient Information

Dietary advice for Gout

What is Gout?

Gout is a type of arthritis which results from deposits of uric acid in the joints. These deposits cause swelling, redness, heat, pain and stiffness in the joints. For many people, gout affects the big toe but it can also affect other joints.

How uric acid crystals develop

Uric acid is produced by the breakdown of purines in the body. It is normally removed in the urine by the kidneys. Sometimes the levels of uric acid build up.

If levels of uric acid become too concentrated, it forms solid crystals causing pain in the affected joints. High levels of uric acid may also increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.

What can people with gout do, to prevent further attacks and stay healthy?

- Gout is best treated when symptoms first appear. To help prevent future attacks, take the medicines your doctor prescribes. Check with your doctor whether any other medicines and vitamins you take increase the risk of producing high levels of uric acid.
- Choose a balanced intake of food. Ensure that you eat no more than 2 servings of protein per day. Choose low fat dairy or vegetable sources of protein such as nuts, soya, eggs or low fat cheese. Ensure your diet includes plenty of fruit and vegetables; aim for 5 portions a day. It may help to avoid foods that are high in purines. (see table).
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water; and try not to exceed recommended alcohol intake.
- Try to exercise regularly and maintain a healthy weight. If you are overweight, try to lose weight slowly.

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Dietary treatment of Gout

Purines are broken down into uric acid. Purines are part of a normal diet, and cannot be avoided completely. It may help to reduce dietary purine by limiting intake of foods that have a high purine content. (See table below).

What foods should I eat?

Purine Content	Food
High	Avoid regular or excessive intake: Heart, Kidney, Liver, Liver paté, Sweet breads. Pheasant, rabbit and venison. Anchovies, Crab, Fish roe, Herring, Mackerel, Sardines, Shrimps, Sprats, Whitebait, mussels, scallops. Meat and yeast extracts (Oxo, Bovril, Marmite) Yeast tablets
Medium	Small helpings: Other fish and seafood, meat and poultry - beef, lamb, chicken, pork, duck. Asparagus, Cauliflower, Mushrooms, Spinach, Beans, peas and lentils; Quorn Wholegrains – oat bran, wholemeal bread Fruit juice; high sugar foods and drinks
Low	No restrictions: Bread, Cereals (except wholegrain) Pasta, Potatoes and Rice Fruits, other Vegetables and Nuts Dairy products (preferably low fat), Eggs Fats, Oils – (but reduce intake if overweight.) Tea, Coffee

Are there any 'good' foods for gout?

There is some evidence, although limited, to suggest that cherries or sour cherry juice or a higher intake of vitamin C can lower the risk of gout attacks. If you are considering a vitamin C supplement always discuss this with your doctor.

What about fluids?

A high intake of fluids can help to remove uric acid through the kidneys. Aim to have at least 8 large glasses of fluids a day (1.5 litres or 2.5-3 pints). If you are on diuretics (water tablets) or have kidney problems, consult your doctor to make sure that a high fluid intake is safe for you.

What about alcohol?

Drinking too much alcohol can make gout worse. Beer, Champagne, Red wine and Port may be worse than other forms of alcohol, but all types have an effect.



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You should moderate your alcohol intake to (or below) safe drinking levels. Try to limit to no more than 14 units per week, with 2 alcohol free days a week. One unit of alcohol is equivalent to ½ of pint beer or cider, 1 small glass of wine or a single pub measure of spirits.

Some alcoholic drinks provide lots of energy (calories) so if you want to lose weight you may need to reduce your alcohol intake.

If you are overweight, try to lose weight

Being overweight can cause an increase in uric acid and puts more strain on the joints. Try to reduce your intake of high energy foods such as fats and sugars. It is important that you do this gradually (1-2lb a week), as strict dieting can bring on an attack of gout.

If you need more detailed advice or if you are following a special diet that makes it difficult to make these changes, please ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian.

Contact details

Nutrition and Dietetic Services

Tel: (01225) 824398 (RUH)

Tel: (01225) 833916 (St Martin's)

Tel: (01249) 456512 (Chippenham)

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