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Diet and Gout

If your healthcare provider has recommended reducing high-purine foods in your diet, you may find the following guidelines helpful:

- Limit your consumption of certain types of meat. Meat items that are particularly high in purines include beef, pork, lamb and “organ meats” (such as liver, kidney and brain), as well as meat extracts and gravies.
- Reduce or eliminate alcohol consumption, especially beer.
- Reduce your use of oatmeal, dried beans, peas, lentils, spinach, asparagus, cauliflower and mushrooms.
- High consumption of seafood is associated with an increased risk of Gout. Specific types of seafood found to be associated with higher levels of uric acid include: anchovies, sardines, roe (fish eggs), herring, mussels, codfish, scallops, trout and haddock.

Foods Good For Gout



Gout occurs most commonly in the big toe because uric acid is sensitive to temperature changes. At cooler temperatures, uric acid turns into crystals. Since the toe is the part of the body that is farthest from the heart, it's also the coolest part of the body – and, thus, the most likely target of gout. However, gout can affect any joint in the body.

The tendency to accumulate uric acid is often inherited. Other factors that put a person at risk for developing gout include: high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, surgery, chemotherapy, stress, and certain medications and vitamins. For example, the body's ability to remove uric acid can be negatively affected by taking aspirin, some diuretic medications (“water pills”), and the vitamin niacin (also called nicotinic acid). While gout is more common in men aged 40 to 60 years, it can occur in younger men as well as in women.

Consuming foods and beverages that contain high levels of purines can trigger an attack of gout. Some foods contain more purines than others and have been associated with an increase of uric acid, which leads to gout. You may be able to reduce your chances of getting a gout attack by limiting or avoiding shellfish, organ meats (kidney, liver, etc.), red wine, beer, and red meat.

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GOUT

Gout is a disorder that results from the build-up of uric acid in the tissues or a joint. It most often affects the joint of the big toe.

Gout attacks are caused by deposits of crystallized uric acid in the joint. Uric acid is present in the blood and eliminated in the urine, but in people who have gout, uric acid accumulates and crystallizes in the joints. Uric acid is the result of the breakdown of purines, chemicals that are found naturally in our bodies and in food. Some people develop gout because their kidneys have difficulty eliminating normal amounts of uric acid, while others produce too much uric acid.

Symptoms

An attack of gout can be miserable, marked by the following symptoms:

- Intense pain that comes on suddenly – often in the middle of the night or upon arising
- Signs of inflammation such as redness, swelling, and warmth over the joint.

Treatment

Initial treatment of an attack of gout typically includes the following:

- **Medications.** Prescription medications or injections are used to treat the pain, swelling, and inflammation.
- **Dietary restrictions.** Foods and beverages that are high in purines should be avoided, since purines are converted in the body to uric acid.
- **Fluids.** Drink plenty of water and other fluids each day, while also avoiding alcoholic beverages, which cause dehydration.
- **Immobilize and elevate the foot.** Avoid standing and walking to give your foot a rest. Also, elevate your foot (level with or slightly above the heart) to help reduce swelling.

The symptoms of gout and the inflammatory process usually resolve in three to ten days with treatment.

If gout symptoms continue despite the initial treatment, or if repeated attacks occur, see your primary care physician for maintenance treatment that may involve daily medication. In cases of repeated episodes, the underlying problem must be addressed, as the build-up of uric acid over time can cause arthritic damage to the joint.

In some cases of gout, surgery is required to remove the uric acid crystals and repair the joint. Your NorthPointe foot and ankle surgeon will determine the procedure that would be most beneficial to your case.

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AGING FEET

On average, a person will walk 75,000 miles by the age of 50 and take up to 10,000 steps on any given day. This creates up to hundreds of tons of foot pressure every day. The podiatrists of NorthPointe Foot & Ankle share that, as we age, proper foot care is essential to maintain good health and to continue walking independence.

In addition to years of wear and tear on our feet, disease, poor circulation, improperly trimmed toenails, and wearing shoes that don't fit properly are hard on feet. Foot problems can be the first sign of more serious medical conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, and nerve and circulatory disorders. Foot pain of any kind is not normal and should be checked by a podiatrist for proper diagnosis and care.

There are several ways to reduce the risk of foot problems:

- **Check feet regularly**, or have a family member check them for skin cracks or peeling, color and temperature anomalies, or thick and discolored nails.
- **Practice good foot care.** Applying moisturizing creams and scrubbing feet with pumice helps keep the skin supple and prevent cracks. Warm Epsom salt baths soothe the feet, while certain exercises strengthen them and improve flexibility. Wash and thoroughly dry feet often.
- **Avoid walking barefoot.**
- **Keep blood circulating as much as possible.** Do this by elevating feet when sitting or lying down, stretching after sitting for long periods of time, walking, having a gentle foot massage, or taking a warm foot bath.
- **Wear proper fitting shoes.** Avoid pressure from shoes that don't fit right. Wearing comfortable shoes that fit well can prevent many foot ailments. The size of our feet change as we age so always measure feet before buying shoes.
- **Minimize exposing feet to cold temperatures.**
- **Don't smoke.** Smokers are more likely to develop blisters and have fractures.

Stay Active



As we age, common foot problems include:

- **Fungal and bacterial conditions**, including athlete's foot, occur because our feet spend a lot of time in shoes - a warm, dark, humid place that is perfect for fungus to grow. Change shoes and socks often to help keep feet dry.
- **Dry skin** can cause itching and burning feet. Use mild soap in small amounts and a moisturizing cream or lotion on feet every day.
- **Corns and calluses** are caused by friction and pressure when the bony parts of our feet rub against our shoes. Treating corns and calluses should be done under the guidance of a medical expert.
- **Warts** are skin growths caused by viruses. They are sometimes painful and, if untreated, may spread.
- **Bunions** develop when the joints in a big toe no longer fit together as they should and become swollen and tender. Bunions tend to be hereditary.
- **Ingrown toenails** occur when a piece of the nail breaks the skin - which can happen if nails are not cut properly. Ingrown toenails are very common in the large toes. A podiatrist can remove the part of the nail that is cutting into the skin. This allows the area to heal.
- **Hammertoe** is caused by a shortening of the tendons that control toe movements. The toe knuckle is usually enlarged, drawing the toe back. Over time, the joint enlarges and stiffens as it rubs against shoes. A person's balance may be affected.
- **Pain in the arch and heel** are caused by muscle strain in the feet. Standing for long periods of time, wearing poorly fitting shoes, or being overweight can make this pain worse.

The doctors of NorthPointe Foot & Ankle recommend that adults over the age of 65 schedule an annual consultation.



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