

## *Orthopaedic Connection*

### **Gout..... Ouch!!**

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#### *Transforming patient information into patient understanding.*

Everyone knows the word “gout”. In the next few minutes I will try to help you learn several things about it. If you have had an attack you could probably write the article.

Gout is a condition that comes on suddenly, out of nowhere. Acute pain, swelling and inflammation occur typically in the big toe. Why there? No one knows. Can it affect other joints? Definitely, yes.

#### **Cause**

Pain and swelling are the body’s response to crystals of a substance called uric acid around the affected joint. Uric acid is formed when your body breaks down a substance called purine; some foods are very high in purine. High uric acid level in your blood can cause crystals to be deposited around a joint. This is very inflammatory and painful. High uric acid levels can also predispose you to forming kidney stones causing even greater trouble than the big toe problem.

#### **Why?**

Gout strikes for no apparent reason. However, there are some factors you should know about.

- Men are affected more than women
- Low dose aspirin and diuretics to treat blood pressure increase gout incidence
- Overweight, high blood pressure, diabetes increase the risk
- Eating lots of red meat and/or seafood can cause it
- Consuming alcohol is a known factor

#### **Gout Attack vs. Infection**

Sudden pain in a joint especially the big toe or another joint can be from gout, but it could be from infection also. I am often called to figure this out as the two conditions can be confused. Infection is most often associated with fever, which is unusual for gout.

#### **Acute Treatment**

Prescription medication such as Indocin (indomethacin) is a mainstay of treatment. It can take up to five days for the inflammation and pain from the attack to subside.

Other medications include oral corticosteroids and colchicine.

#### **Management**

Uric acid level needs to be monitored and may need to be lowered. This is done by lowering or eliminating foods and alcohol in your diet thought to be the cause.

Medications that might be needed to control uric acid and therefore gout attacks include Zyloprim, Probenecid and a new one called Uloric. Choosing and managing the proper drug for you requires careful monitoring as they do have side effects.

Because uric acid levels can rise and fall it can take six months to control gout even after you have started taking a uric acid lowering drug.

I hope this has given you some helpful information in understanding the painful, troubling condition we call gout.

*My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.*

**Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website**

I hope what you have read has raised questions. No problem.

Please log onto [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com). It has a huge amount of musculoskeletal information in the Website and the Archive of all previous GCH articles.

Check it out and be amazed what you can learn.

Good health, good life, all the best to you. Be well.

Dr. Haverbush