

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.

All Orthopaedic Surgery problems can be evaluated by Dr. Haverbush at the Lakeview Community Wellness Center in Lakeview or at the office in Alma at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan.

Please call 989-463-6092 for information or to schedule an appointment.

Future Lakeview Community Wellness Center Clinic dates are July 3, July 16 and July 31, 2009.

Please don't forget there is a wealth of accurate information about all the Orthopaedic conditions I treat on the office teaching website www.orthopodsurgeon.com. Please log on and check it out.

We are happy to answer questions from readers. You can e-mail me at orthopodsurgeon@hotmail.com or write to me at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan 48801.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush

