

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Gout: Important Information

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Gout is a very popular subject with TV advertising I have noticed. All of my patients have heard about it and know it causes swelling and pain especially in the foot. After that it gets a little fuzzy for most people.

What Is It Exactly?

It is definitely one of the many forms of arthritis. Many types of arthritis are secondary to a mechanical process where injury or excessive weight seems to cause the joint(s) to wear out.

Gout however is caused by the accumulation of uric acid crystals in one or more joints. No other arthritis does this making gout unique.

Uric Acid?

Uric acid forms as our body breaks down something called purines. Purines are a substance normal in the body. Purines are also present in many kinds of foods.

Normally the body gets rid of excessive purines by the kidneys excreting them in the urine. Purines form uric acid and it is also normal in the body over a certain low range. In persons who have developed gout, uric acid builds up in the blood to a level that causes uric acid crystals to be deposited in joints. Up to this point the patient may have no clue they have a gout problem.

Gout Attack!!

Uric acid crystals have no place normally in joints and cause severe symptoms of swelling, increased warmth, pain, stiffness and redness. Classically gout attacks the foot and for some reason, the big toe in particular. It can affect other joints also in the feet, ankles, knees and even the hand and wrist. It is so disabling you can't ignore it.

Who Gets Gout?

- Many more men than women at any age
- Women after menopause and especially over 65
- If you are overweight
- If you drink too much alcohol
- Have high cholesterol
- If you have diabetes or hypertension
- Have a family history
- If you take aspirin or water pills (diuretics)
- If you eat a lot of animal foods like meat, fish and poultry

What To Do For An Attack

It starts at night. No warning usually. Drink as much water as you possibly can to flush excess uric acid out through the kidneys. Stop drinking alcohol. Cut way back on animal food products. Stop regular soda pop. Place ice on the affected joint(s). You can take anti-inflammatory medication you might have on hand such as Advil or similar. Don't take aspirin.

Of course as soon as you can, you should see your doctor who will do a uric acid test and prescribe some specific medication.

Prevention

Your doctor will have a more long range medical plan to hopefully prevent future attacks by decreasing the uric acid level in your body. But there is much more to a “gout treatment strategy” than taking a daily pill.

Your doctor must effectively manage your cholesterol, blood pressure and diabetes. Unfortunately that’s the easy part. What else? Well, it is what you don’t want to hear or do. But if you hope to manage gout and prevent attacks, you have to:

- Exercise. Ugh!
- Lose weight. Ugh! Ugh!
- Follow a gout prevention diet
- Drink lots of water

Gout can destroy joints so please don’t ignore this good advice to control it and prevent a whole lot of trouble in the future.

Office Website and Argus Orthopaedic Archive

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

Please log onto www.orthopodsurgeon.com. It has a huge amount of musculoskeletal information in the Website and the Archive of all previous Argus articles.

Check it out and be amazed what you can learn.

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

Dr. Haverbush