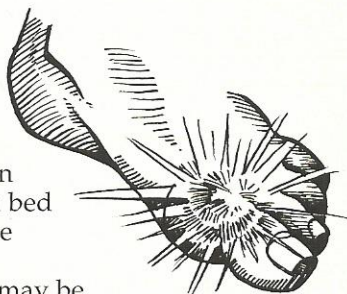


# GOUT

Gout is a type of arthritis. People who get gout usually have a high level of uric acid (urate) in their blood, which can form crystals in joints and surrounding tissue. The most common site to get gout is in the big toe. Other areas can also be affected also e.g. elbows, hands and knees. Gout most commonly affects middle-aged men. Gout can come on very quickly, often at night, the pain can be severe and cause great disability.

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- a joint that suddenly becomes hot, red and swollen
- an extremely tender joint, painful, sensitive and dry to the touch – sometimes even the weight of a bed sheet can cause severe pain
- a temperature may be present



## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- a family history of gout
- drink too much alcohol
- are overweight
- eat foods that increase the level of uric acid in your blood (see below)
- have certain health problems (ask your doctor)
- take certain medicines (ask your pharmacist or doctor)
- wearing tight fitting shoes
- physical stress/stressful event

Eliminating some or all of these factors will reduce the risk of future attacks and the need for long-term drug treatment.

## FOODS THAT INCREASE URIC ACID LEVELS

- large amounts of meat, including poultry
- sardines, herrings, anchovies, shellfish
- Liver, kidney, heart, brains
- meat extracts (e.g. Bonox, Bovril, gravies)
- yeast, baker's and brewer's
- Vegemite, Marmite, Promite
- large amounts of legumes (e.g. lentils, peas, beans etc)
- if you don't treat your gout correctly, the time between attacks can get shorter and more joints can be affected
- people who have gout attacks often may also develop kidney problems later in life if their gout isn't well controlled



Eat a healthy diet, including breads, rice, pasta, vegetables, cereals and low-fat dairy products

## SELF CARE

- if you get gout symptoms, see your doctor as soon as possible so you can get the right treatment quickly
- if you have been prescribed regular medicines to prevent another attack of acute gout, it is important you take your medicines every day even if you do not currently have any symptoms, otherwise recurrent bouts of acute gout will occur
- try light beer and low alcohol wines and avoid drinking a lot of alcohol at one time (binge drinking) as this may bring on an attack
- drink plenty of fluid, this can help prevent kidney problems from occurring (check with your doctor if you have kidney or heart problems)
- if you are overweight, start a low fat diet (see *Weight & Health* and *Fat & Cholesterol* Fact Cards)
- avoid vigorous exercise but keep your joints mobile with regular moderate exercise (see *Exercise & the Heart* and *Exercises for Flexibility* Fact Cards)
- reduce your dietary salt intake
- eat a healthy diet, including breads, rice, pasta, vegetables, cereals and low-fat dairy products
- stay at your ideal weight (see *Weight & Health* Fact Card)

## MEDICINES

Talk to your pharmacist and doctor about how to use the medicines that are prescribed for your gout. There are two types of gout medicine – medicines to relieve attacks, and medicines to prevent attacks.

### Relieving attacks

- start medicines that relieve the pain at the first sign of an attack, and take for as long as your doctor or pharmacist tell you to.
- aspirin should be avoided, it can raise the level of uric acid in your blood (see *Pain Relievers* Fact Card). Talk to your doctor or

pharmacist about the right medicines for you to take

### Preventing attacks

- after your first gout attack, you are at risk of having more attacks. Some medicines (e.g. allopurinol) lower uric acid levels and help prevent future attacks. They can also reduce existing gout crystal collections (tophi) and help prevent new ones forming
- these medicines may be started after you've had a few attacks. A low dose is used at first and then slowly increased if needed
- don't start taking medicines to prevent gout during or straight after an attack. Ask your doctor and pharmacist
- these medicines won't relieve an attack that has already started and will prevent attacks only while you take them regularly. Taking these medicines on-and-off may put you at risk of an attack
- gout attacks may continue to occur during the first 3-6 months you are taking medicines to prevent attacks. Your doctor may advise you to keep taking medicine for relieving attacks during this time

### Other relevant Fact Cards

- *Weight & Health*
- *Exercise & the Heart*
- *Pain Relievers*
- *Fat & Cholesterol*
- *Exercises for Flexibility*

### Contact

**Your doctor** – listed under *Medical Practitioners* in the yellow pages of the phone book

**Arthritis Foundation of Australia** – listed under 'A' in the white pages of the phone book

**Dietitians Association of Australia** – listed under 'D' in the white pages of your capital city phone book

**Your Self Care pharmacist.** To find: (02) 6283 4777

In case of poisoning, phone the **Poisons Information Centre** on 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask your pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

Your Self Care Pharmacist

KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN  
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