



Gout

DESCRIPTION

Gout affects 0.5% of the world population and can be a hereditary ailment. Of the people afflicted by gout, 95% are male.

Gout is regarded as a form of arthritis and is typified by an accumulation of uric acid crystals that tend to collect in areas of the body where the temperature is lower. It is predominantly seen in the big toes, but other body parts may be affected. Uric acid is a natural anti-oxidant, but through various pathways it can become too abundant and inflammation will arise.

Uric acid is the end product caused by the breakdown of purines. Purines are naturally found in the body and are found in many foods. Excess uric acid (hyperuricemia) in the body can be caused by:

- an increase in production of uric acid by the body
- under elimination of uric acid by the kidneys
- increased intake of foods high in purines. In the past this was believed to be the primary and essential cause of gout, but this view is now not generally accepted, though there is some evidence to suggest that the acute attack can be induced by high purine diet in patients predisposed to gout.

RISK FACTORS

- Approximately one in four people with gout have a family history of the disease. Lesch-Hyhan syndrome, which is a genetic defect in the body's metabolism of purines, causes increased endogenous production of purines. This in turn leads to excessive concentrations of uric acid (hyperuricemia) implicated in gout
- Consuming a steady diet of foods that are high in purines (foods that are high in purines break down in the body to uric acid)
- Habitual heavy eaters often develop gout because large quantities of food increase the amount of uric acid produced by the body.

- Taking certain medications. Drugs that reduce the body's ability to remove uric acid, such as diuretics, salicylates and levodopa contribute towards the development of gout. Since the vitamin B3 (niacin) raises uric acid levels, it may also contribute toward the condition when used in excess.

- Having certain degenerative conditions that give rise to excessive breakdown of cells. This can increase serum purine levels which in turn increase the amount of uric acid in the body.

Acute symptoms of gout (flare-ups) seem to happen more frequently under certain conditions. These include:

- Having an infection, or an injury or surgery
- Overindulgence in alcohol or purine-rich foods
- Being stressed
- Being dehydrated

The medicine Colchicine which is prescribed for gout can disrupt normal intestinal mucosal function, leading to mal-absorption of several nutrients, including vitamin B12. Lower doses do not seem to have a significant effect on vitamin B12 absorption after 3 years of Colchicine therapy. The significance of this interaction is unclear. Vitamin B12 levels should be monitored in people taking large doses of Colchicine for prolonged periods.

NUTRITIONAL INTERVENTIONS

The following measures can help alleviate the symptoms during an attack of gout -

- Ensure adequate water intake i.e. a minimum of 2 litres of water daily. Dehydration plays a big part in the development of gout
- Avoid alcohol
- Avoid or curtail to a reasonable extent high purine foods, including meat (see below). Alternative sources of protein should be included in a low-purine diet (white fish, chicken, eggs, etc.)
- Stimulate urination via natural diuretics such as celery, beetroot, lettuce and potato rosemary and cherries (not a true diuretic but may alleviate gout by lowering uric acid levels - as little as 250 grams of cherries per day can lower uric acid levels in gout patients).

It is helpful to follow a diet which helps reduce inflammation as recommended below.

ANTI INFLAMMATORY DIET

Recommended Foods

Eat a diet which is based on organic, fresh ingredients:

- Drink plenty of water and other fluids. Increase water to 2 litres per day.
- Nettle tea: high mineral content
- Green tea: Contains polyphenols that fight oxidation in arthritic joints.
- Rosehip tea: drink 2-3 cups per day
- High in complex carbohydrates (fibre-rich whole grains, fruits, and vegetables). Good grains include millet, oats, rice and buckwheat
- Good quality protein such as soy, fish, eggs or poultry
- No more than 20% of calories in fat (with only 10% animal fats).

Low-fat dairy products

- Bananas, artichokes for FOS (fructooligosaccharide - a natural fruit sugar)
- Fresh cherries, strawberries, blueberries, and other red-blue berries have antioxidant compounds that protect cartilage, tendons and joints. At least 10 fresh cherries and berries daily
- Celery and celery seeds are a traditional food-based remedy that has been observed to help halt inflammatory flare-ups as they are natural diuretics, decreasing uric acid
- Vegetables including kale, cabbage, parsley, green-leafy vegetables, okra, fresh vegetable juices
- Foods high in bromelain (pineapple)
- Foods high in vitamin C (red cabbage, kiwi fruit, acerola)
- Ginger and Turmeric: Inhibits pain-producing prostaglandins
- Garlic: Acts as an antibiotic and anti-inflammatory. Add fennel, caraway seeds, alfalfa, garlic and fresh herbs to cooking
- Essential fatty acids from cold water fish such as tuna and salmon; and from good quality oils such as flax, walnut, olive, etc. Oils like walnut, flaxseed, and grape seed can actually decrease pain and swelling, so pour over salads, and vegetables
- Increase antioxidant containing foods i.e. sweet potatoes, apricots, carrots, mangoes, broccoli, avocado, onions
- Shiitake mushroom: Boosts immunity. Add to soups, casseroles, stir-fries and salads regularly

Avoid / Eliminate

- Alcohol (especially beer), sugars, simple CHOs additives, saturated fats, margarine etc
- Fizzy drinks as they contain phosphates that deplete calcium levels.
- Eliminate citrus fruit
- Reduce red meat intake, avoid organ meats such as liver, kidney, heart, brain, etc. Avoid game meat i.e. venison, pigeon, goose, etc.
- Refined/ processed foods
- All yeast-containing foods such as extracts (Bovril, Marmite, Vegemite), essence of chicken, brewers and baker's yeast, canned / powdered soups & stock cubes, consommé, gravies, sauces, etc.
- Solanacea vegetables i.e. tomatoes, white potatoes, aubergine, peppers
- Avoid eating foods high in purines

The following is a list of purine rich foods:

Herbs:	hawthorn berries
Meats:	kidneys, liver
Seafood:	anchovies, caviar, sardines, shellfish, herring, mackerel
Yeasts:	brewer's yeast

HOMEOPATHY

Homeopathy can help restore balance to the body and alleviate the symptoms of gout. Moreover treatment by a qualified homeopath will raise the general level of health and so prevent recurrences of gout. Please phone Pauline to discuss this.

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