

Managing Gout Through Diet

Gout is a painful type of inflammatory arthritis that is caused by high levels of **uric acid** in the blood.

Uric acid is made from purines, which are compounds found in all of our body's tissues and are also present in many foods. When our body breaks down purines, it produces uric acid, which is normally carried through the blood and removed via urine.

Uric acid can build up in the body due to various reasons. The level of uric acid in the blood can rise (called hyperuricemia) if:

- the production of uric acid is increased by the body (this can be an inherited condition),
- the kidneys' ability to eliminate uric acid decreases,
- foods that are high in purines or that interfere with the removal of uric acid are consumed regularly.

When the level of uric acid in our blood is high, it forms crystals that gather and collect around a joint and cause gout and the pain associated with it. The good news is that gout is the only type of arthritis that can be controlled by changing diet and lifestyle habits.

Purine-rich foods and drinks and should be limited or avoided if you have gout. These foods are categorized and listed below, along with additional useful information.

• Alcohol



Alcoholic drinks, especially beer and distilled spirits should be avoided. This is because alcohol interferes with the elimination of uric acid from your body. When you are not having an attack, drinking a 5-ounce serving of wine a day may be fine.

• Seafood



Anchovies, tuna, herring, mackerel, shrimp, lobster, scallops and other shellfish should be avoided. You can eat other kinds of fish but limit your intake to 4 to 6 ounces (113 to 170 grams) per day.

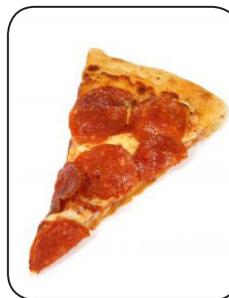
• Meat



Red meat such as beef, pork, and lamb, as well as meat-based gravies should be limited. Organ meats such as liver, kidneys and sweetbreads should be avoided. You can eat

different kinds of poultry but limit your intake to 4 to 6 ounces (113 to 170 grams) per day.

• Fats



Saturated fat in dairy and other animal products as well as hydrogenated fats should be avoided. Decreasing saturated fat can substantially lower uric acid levels.

• Dairy



Avoid high-fat dairy products. Instead, choose low-fat or fat-free dairy products as some studies suggest that low-fat dairy products can help reduce the risk of gout. Increase your protein intake from low-fat dairy sources, especially low-fat cheese and yogurt.

• Carbohydrates



Processed carbohydrates and sweets such as white bread, cakes and candy should be limited. Replace refined carbohydrates in your diet with complex carbohydrates.

• Miscellaneous

Baking or brewer's yeast should be avoided.

• Added sugars



Foods or drinks sweetened with sugar or high-fructose corn syrup should be avoided as fructose can increase uric acid levels in your blood. Pure (100 percent) fruit juice does not affect uric acid production as much and it may be fine to drink in moderation (around ½ cup daily).

• Medications



Certain medications can also contribute to the risk of gout. These include diuretics (water pills) used to treat heart disease or high blood pressure, salicylate-containing drugs such as aspirin, niacin in form of nicotinic acid, cyclosporine and levodopa. Your physician can alter your medications to reduce the risk of gout flares.

In addition to following the dietary restrictions mentioned above, remember to drink plenty of fluids to help flush uric acid from your body. Aim for 8 to 16 cups a day. Drinking coffee is fine.

If you are overweight or obese, weight loss will help reduce the risk of gout so work towards achieving a healthy weight.

Prepared by Maryam S. Hamidi PhD and Hajera Khaja MSc from Dr. Angela M. Cheung's research team. This information is copyrighted by University Health Network Osteoporosis Program March 04, 2014.



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