

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GOUT

In the Clinic
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What Is Gout?

Gout is a type of arthritis that causes swelling, redness, and severe pain in joints like the big toe. It happens when there is too much uric acid in your body. Uric acid can form painful crystals in the joints. Although anyone can get gout, you are more likely to if you:

- Have high uric acid levels
- Have a genetic predisposition
- Are male
- Are an older adult
- Have obesity
- Have certain health conditions, such as kidney failure, high blood pressure, and diabetes
- Take certain medicines, such as water pills
- Eat certain foods, such as red meat and organ meat (liver)
- Drink alcohol and sugary drinks, such as soda and sugar-sweetened juice



What Are the Warning Signs?

The signs and symptoms of gout usually happen suddenly, without warning, and at night. This is called a "flare." Signs of a flare include:

- Severe joint pain, often in the big toe
- Joint pain in other parts of your feet and in your ankles, knees, hands, and wrists
- Swelling, redness, stiffness, and tenderness in the affected joints
- Pain is most severe in the first 24 hours. Gout flares can last 1 to 2 weeks.

How Is It Diagnosed?

- Your doctor will ask you about your symptoms and examine your joints.
- He or she may take a small sample of fluid from an affected joint to look for signs of gout crystals under a microscope.
- Blood tests and imaging tests, such as X-rays or ultrasounds, can also help your doctor learn more about your symptoms.

How Is It Treated?

Treatment for a gout flare starts with medicines that decrease your pain and stop the flare. This can include anti-inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen.

Some people may need more treatment. If you have a history of repeated gout flares, nodules from gout crystals, a history of kidney stones, or kidney problems, your doctor may prescribe medicines that help decrease uric acid levels. This will help prevent future flares and complications, such as joint damage. These medicines may temporarily increase risk for a flare, so your doctor may recommend taking medicines to prevent the flare for the first few months.

Lifestyle changes can also help. These include losing weight if you have overweight, avoiding certain foods, limiting alcoholic drinks, and drinking lots of water.

Your doctor may recommend periodic blood tests to check uric acid levels. He or she may also refer you to a specialist if you need more treatment.

Questions for My Doctor

- What treatment is best for me?
- When will my symptoms go away?
- Will gout damage my joints?
- Should I avoid certain foods and drinks?
- Do any of my medicines increase my uric acid levels?
- Can I take a painkiller?
- When I have a flare, are there any activities I should avoid?
- What can happen if my gout is not treated?
- How can I reduce my future risk for flares?

For More Information



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American College of Rheumatology

<https://rheumatology.org/patients/gout>
<https://rheumatology.org/patients/gota>

Arthritis Foundation

www.arthritis.org/about-arthritis/types/gout

MedlinePlus

<https://medlineplus.gov/gout.html>
<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/gout.html>

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases

www.niams.nih.gov/health-topics/gout