



Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

Oxford Kidney Unit

# Dietary advice for managing gout

Information for patients





This leaflet is for you if you are suffering from gout. It will give you information to help manage your symptoms.

## What is gout?

Gout causes flare-ups of painful arthritis in the joints. The joint most affected by gout is the big toe, but other areas, such as the knees, ankles and wrists, can also be affected. If gout remains untreated, the flare-ups can last for a long time and keep coming back.

## What causes gout?

Gout is caused by a build-up of uric acid in your blood and muscles. This is known as a 'metabolic disorder'.

The high level of uric acid can cause crystals to form in your joints and kidneys, causing a flare-up. The main aim of treatment is to reduce the levels of uric acid in your blood.

## What is uric acid?

Uric acid is created when the body breaks down purines. Purines are found in many foods. Normally, the kidneys remove uric acid, which passes out in your urine.

## What can I do to manage gout?

Being overweight increases the production of uric acid in the body and reduces the amount that can be removed by your kidneys. Being very overweight (obese) can also affect your body's ability to break down sugar, which can also lead to high uric acid levels.

Reducing your weight gradually should reduce the frequency and severity of flare-ups. Try to avoid crash, yo-yo dieting and fasting. These can make your kidneys hold onto uric acid, making your symptoms worse. Speak to your GP or nurse for support and ask for a referral to a dietitian.

## Reducing the levels of purine in your diet

You should eat a healthy, balanced diet, but reduce the number of high purine foods you eat. This will help to prevent sudden attacks of gout and reduce the frequency of flare-ups.

### **High purine foods and drinks**

- offal, such as liver and kidney
- game, such as pheasant, rabbit and venison
- seafood, such as prawns, mussels and clams
- sugar-sweetened soft drinks, such as fizzy drinks and fruit juices
- foods high in refined sugar, such as biscuits and cakes
- alcohol, such as beer, ale, fortified wine and port. White wine and spirits are better alternatives. Try to have some alcohol free days each week. Try and keep below the recommended units of alcohol per week (14 units a week for both men and women).

## **Low purine foods**

The following foods contain low levels of purines and can be eaten freely.

- dairy, such as milk, yogurts and cheese
- dairy-free alternatives, such as soya products
- eggs
- fruits and vegetables
- bread and cereals
- pasta, rice and noodles.

Poultry, red meat and fish can be eaten in moderation.

## Fluid

Try to avoid becoming dehydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day. You should try to drink at least 2 litres (3 and a half pints) each day, with more in the summer months or when exercising. If you are on dialysis or have chronic kidney disease, talk to your dialysis nurse, dietitian or doctor about your fluid levels.

### **Are there some drinks that are better than others?**

Drinking sugar-sweetened drinks, such as full sugar soft drinks or juices fortified with additional sweeteners (fructose, fructose corn syrup or cane sugar), as well as freshly pressed juices or smoothies, increases the amount of uric acid in the body. This may cause gout flare-ups.

Try to drink water, tea/coffee, with no added sugar. Try to avoid or reduce the number of soft drinks and diet fizzy drinks.

## Useful websites

### **UK Gout Society**

This website has lots more information about managing gout.

Website: [www.ukgoutsociety.org](http://www.ukgoutsociety.org)

### **Arthritis Research UK**

Whilst this site is about arthritis, they have useful information about gout.

Website: [www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/conditions/gout.aspx](http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/conditions/gout.aspx)

### **NHS Choices**

This has useful information about gout.

Website: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/Gout/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Gout/Pages/Introduction.aspx)



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