

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GOUT

In the Clinic
Annals of Internal Medicine

What is gout?

- Gout is a very painful type of arthritis caused when crystals form in joints or soft tissues.
- Gout causes sudden joint swelling, redness, heat, and pain, often in the big toe.
- Acute attacks often start at night and last about 1 week.
- A build-up of uric acid known as tophi can form lumps around joints and tissues and damage joints.

Who is most likely to develop gout?

- Middle-aged men
- Women after menopause
- People with high uric acid levels
- Overweight people
- Certain foods increase the risk for gout (red meats, organ meats [liver], shellfish, some fish [anchovies], alcohol, and sugary soft drinks).
- Some medications, such as diuretics (water pills), and some diseases, such as diabetes and kidney problems, increase the risk for gout.

How is gout diagnosed?

- The best way to diagnose gout is to have the doctor draw some fluid from the joint with a needle and have it examined under a microscope for urate crystals.

What should I do if I think I have gout?

- Contact your doctor to treat the pain and shorten the attack.
- The pain and inflammation can be treated by nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (such as naproxen or ibuprofen), colchicine, or corticosteroids (either by mouth or as an injection into the joint).
- After more than 1 gout attack, you need to take medicine long-term to lower the uric acid level and to prevent gout and other complications. You need to take the medicine just as the doctor prescribed it in order for it to work.
- Lifestyle changes and switching some medications that can raise the level of uric acid can also help.

For More Information

Web Sites With Good Information About Gout

www.rheumatology.org/public/factsheets/diseases_and_conditions/gout.asp?aud=pat

American College of Rheumatology: Gout

www.arthritis.org/disease-center.php?disease_id=42

Arthritis Foundation: Gout

www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Gout/default.asp

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases: Questions and Answers About Gout

www.gouteducation.org/

Gout and Uric Acid Education Society

ACP
AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
INTERNAL MEDICINE | *Doctors for Adults*[®]