

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Katie Gravesen, DC

Drug-Free Approaches to Preventing Gout

Gout is a metabolic disorder sparked by an overabundance of uric acid in the blood (hyperuricemia). This excess uric acid forms crystals that lodge in various joints. In addition to the big toe, joints commonly affected by gout include the knees, ankles, wrists, feet and hands. Symptoms include redness, swelling, extreme tenderness and pain.

Luckily, there are all-natural and effective ways to both prevent gout and alleviate its symptoms. Sufferers don't have to rely on potentially harmful medications.

Although primarily a disease of developed countries, studies suggest the global incidence and severity of hyperuricemia and gout may be on the rise (*Curr Pharm Des* 2005;11:4133-8).

While women are not immune to the ravages of gout, men are its primary target. In fact, researchers list gout as the "most common inflammatory arthritis in men, affecting approximately one to two percent of adult men in Western countries." (*Curr Opin Rheumatol* 2006;18:193-8).

The Effects of Gout

Obesity, diabetes and chronic kidney failure are among the conditions long-associated with gout (*Adv Chronic Kidney Dis* 2006;13:124-30).

Gout may lead to kidney failure because it is linked with the formation of kidney stones. Elevated levels of uric acid may also spark high blood pressure.

In addition, heightened levels of uric acid in the blood are associated with cardiovascular problems (*Curr Opin Rheumatol* 2006;18:199-203).



The Truth About Gout Medications

Dr. Gravesen is committed to helping patients adopt the *chiropractic lifestyle*, a way of life that focuses on preventing health problems — such as gout — rather than merely masking symptoms with medication.

"All of the drugs used to treat gout can have serious side effects," note the authors of an article published in the medical journal *Rheumatology*. "The incidence of gout is highest in the elderly population. It is in this group, who are at a high risk of serious adverse events, that we are using drugs of known toxicity." (*Rheumatology* 2006;45:Epub.)

In addition to promoting all-natural prevention strategies for and solutions to gout, Dr. Gravesen encourages patients not to wait until their pain becomes debilitating to take it seriously. Why? Because doing so, in the case of gout, could have disastrous consequences.

Preventing & Managing Gout Naturally

Read on for drug-free ways to manage and prevent gout.

Minimize "Bad" Purine ...

Purine is a protein chemical that raises blood levels of gout-producing uric acid.



In a 12-year study of 47,150 men with no previous history of gout, researchers confirmed that those who consumed large quantities of red meat and seafood were at a higher risk of developing the disorder, compared with men who avoided these purine-rich food sources (*N Engl J Med* 2004;350:1093-103).

Organ meats, such as liver, are particularly high in purine, as are sardines and herring.

... But Not All Purine

In the past, doctors advised patients with gout to avoid not only purine-rich meats and seafood, but all foods high in purine: including certain vegetables. However, recent research reveals that a modest intake of purine-rich vegetables is *not* a contributing factor to gout.

Legumes, in particular, contain high levels of purine. These include black-eyed peas; chickpeas (garbanzos); green peas; black, fava, lima, pinto, red-kidney and navy beans. Asparagus is also high in purine.

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So what should someone suffering from gout eat? Unless you are particularly sensitive to purine-rich vegetables, instead of eliminating them from your diet, simply modify your consumption. This way you don't deprive your body of the other beneficial nutrients found in these foods.

What Else to Eat & Drink

The Massachusetts Medical Society also discovered that patients who boost their intake of dairy products show a corresponding *decrease* in the development of gout (*N Engl J Med* 2004;350:1093-103).

And in a published journal article, researchers note that ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and *moderate* wine consumption may help protect against gout (*Curr Opin Rheumatol* 2006;18:193-8).

Per-day alcohol moderation means a single, small glass. That's because researchers from the University of California have determined that two to three drinks a day (or more) worsens gout (*J Am Geriatr Soc* 2006;54:757).

Dehydration also exacerbates gout. Drinking a minimum of eight glasses of water each day keeps kidneys, and the entire body, happy and healthy.

Caffeine, on the other hand, may trigger gout. So avoid all caffeinated products.

Supplements to Add & Avoid

As mentioned earlier, vitamin C is one of the "good guys" when it comes to battling gout. According to doctors at Johns Hopkins University, "Supplementation with 500 mg per day of vitamin C for two months reduces serum uric acid, suggesting that vitamin C might be beneficial in the prevention and management of gout and other urate-related diseases." (*Arthritis Rheum* 2005;52:1843-7.)

Cherries and 100 percent cherry juice are rich in vitamin C and contain anti-inflammatory agents that help control the pain and inflammation associated with gout. You'll find concentrated cherry juice in the refrigerator section of most health-food stores.

Other supplements that may alleviate gout include alfalfa, garlic, dandelion, juniper, cloves, hyssop and yarrow.

On the other hand, gout sufferers should never take protein supplements. In addition, avoid supplements containing high levels of vitamin B³ (niacin).

Niacin, also known as nicotinic acid, stimulates the "flushing" of bodily fluids — much like diuretics — and is linked to a modest elevation of uric acid in the blood (*Arq Bras Cardiol* 2005;85:17-9).

Medications That Trigger Gout

A number of prescription and over-the-counter drugs — including aspirin and the tuberculosis drug pyrazinamide — can increase the formation of uric acid and spark gout attacks. The drug cyclosporins, which is used for organ transplants, rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis, is also a gout-provoker (*Baillieres Clin Rheumatol* 1991;5:39-60).

Diuretics, commonly referred to as "water pills," are also problematic. Studies show that diuretics elevate levels of uric acid in the blood (*Cardiovasc Drugs Ther* 2003;17:397-414). According to researchers, "diuretic-induced hyperuricemia has become a global phenomenon."

Speaking of diuretics, allopurinol and uricosuric drugs are designed to control the formation of uric acid. The ironic twist, however, is that they can instigate gout through the rapid lowering of uric acid in the blood: just like diuretics (*Baillieres Clin Rheumatol* 1991;5:39-60).

Allopurinol is also known to spark allergic reactions. The Norwegian Reporting System reveals a wide range of allopurinol side effects between 1973 and 2003 — from simple skin rashes to fatalities (*Tidsskr Nor Laegeforen* 2004;124:2618-9).

While stimulating a rapid lowering of uric acid in the blood may lead to gout, the opposite is also true. Levodopa (L-dopa) drugs, engineered to offset the symptoms of Parkinson's

disease, may cause hyperuricemia and gout by *reducing* the body's ability to eliminate uric acid (*J Pharmacol Exp Ther* 1982;223:55-9).

Lifestyle Changes

In addition to the tactics listed previously, consider the following lifestyle changes to combat gout.

Lose Weight

Obesity is a well-known contributor to gout. Fortunately, losing weight has a protective effect against the disease by lowering blood uric acid levels (*Curr Pharm Des* 2005;11:4133-8).

Reverse Insulin Resistance

Research highlights a strong association between insulin resistance syndrome (IRS) and the development of gout. IRS symptoms include abdominal obesity, hypertension, raised serum insulin levels and glucose intolerance (*Curr Pharm Des* 2005;11:4133-8). Insulin resistance is often a precursor to diabetes.

The key to reversing IRS is daily exercise and a diet that is low-fat, low-carbohydrate and features foods that are low on the glycemic index (*Nutr Metab Cardiovasc Dis* 2004;14:334).

Seek Chiropractic Care

A number of other conditions mimic gout. That's why it is essential to have a chiropractic evaluation and avoid self-diagnosis.

Your doctor of chiropractic can provide you with the advice you need to help prevent gout. But that's not all. In addition to monitoring your spine and musculoskeletal system for degeneration and disease, your doctor can determine if your gout-like symptoms really are caused by gout.

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