

## Gout

### What is gout?

Gout is a common type of arthritis. When you have gout, the level of uric acid in your blood is high causing crystals to form in joints. A joint may become swollen, red and very tender.

Gout is treated by:

- Medications
- Healthy lifestyle choices

### Lifestyle strategies

#### 1. *Maintain a healthy body weight*

Gout is more common in people who are overweight. Losing weight can assist in gout management. However rapid weight loss may increase your uric acid level so it is important that you aim for gradual weight loss of 0.5-1kg per week.

#### 2. *Cut down on alcohol*

Alcohol can greatly increase your uric acid levels. Limiting the amount of alcohol you drink, especially beer and spirits, may reduce your risk of gout.

Speak to your doctor about whether it is ok for you to drink alcohol. During a gout attack it is best to avoid alcohol.

#### 3. *Keep hydrated*

Drinking plenty of water helps to dilute the uric acid levels in your body. It is important to drink 8-10 glasses of water or fluid per day.

There is research that suggests sugary drinks such as fruit juices or soft drinks may increase your risk of gout. As these drinks also contribute to weight gain it is recommended to limit their consumption. Choose lower kilojoule alternatives such as diet drinks or better still, choose water.

#### 4. *What should I eat?*

There are some foods that appear to trigger a gout attack. These foods contain a high level of purines, which form uric acid in the body.

Foods high in purines include:

- Meat – mostly red meat and organ meats (e.g. kidney, liver)
- Seafood – mostly shellfish, scallops, mussels, sardines
- Yeast – found in vegemite, beer

Meat and seafood also contain many essential nutrients and can be included in your diet, however only small portions are recommended. Organ meats are very high in purines and should be avoided.

*Vegetable intake is encouraged*

Purine rich vegetables such as cauliflower, spinach, peas, beans and lentils, have not been associated with an increased risk of gout attack. Vegetable intake is encouraged as part of a healthy diet.

*Include low fat dairy*

Some evidence suggests a benefit of including low fat dairy to prevent gout attacks. Foods such as skimmed milk and low-fat yoghurt may lower uric acid levels in the body. These foods also contain many important nutrients and should be included in your diet.

*In summary*

Healthy lifestyle choices and a medical treatment plan are effective for the prevention and management of gout.

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**For further information, contact your Dietitian or Nutritionist:** \_\_\_\_\_

