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 a range of medications although there are lifestyle factors that may reduce the likelihood of gout attacks.

Lifestyle Strategies
1. Maintain a healthy body weight
Gout is more common in people who are overweight. Losing weight if you are overweight 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. It is recommended that healthy men and women drink no more than two standard drinks on any given day. 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 6-8 glasses of water or fluid per day. Australian soft drinks do not contain high-fructose corn syrup that may increase your risk of gout. Although reducing your soft drink intake or choosing diet options may assist with your weight control.

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. Purine-rich foods include:
- Meat – particularly red meat and organ meats (e.g. kidney, liver)
- Seafood – particularly shellfish, scallops, mussels, sardines
- Yeast – found in vegemite, beer

These foods contain many essential nutrients and are important to include in your diet however only small portions are recommended.

Healthy lifestyle choices combined with a correct treatment program will assist with the successful management of gout.