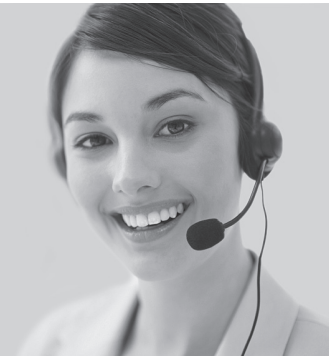


“It was great to talk with you.

Thank you for your interest in ‘Five Lifestyle Guidelines for Gout.’
I hope you find this tip sheet helpful.

Please give me a call if you have more questions about this or other topics.

As your UPMC Health Plan health coach, I’m ready to help in any way I can.”



What Is Gout?

- Gout is a kind of arthritis in one or more joints. The most common joint for gout is at the base of the big toe. Gout can also happen in your hands, wrists, elbow, knees, ankles, or feet.
- In a gout attack, the joint suddenly becomes swollen, red, tender, and very painful. Touching the joint with anything (even a bed sheet) can cause severe pain.
- The most intense pain often happens within 12 to 24 hours after an attack starts. Then the joint may ache for a few days or weeks.

What Causes Gout? How Is It Treated?

- Purines are a substance found in certain foods. The body also makes purines.
- The body gets rid of excess purines by making uric acid. Uric acid travels through the blood, into the kidneys, and out of the body in urine.
- In gout, the body makes too much uric acid. Or the kidneys do not get rid of all of it.
- It forms sharp, needle-like crystals in the joints. It may also form kidney stones.
- You have a greater chance of getting gout if you:
 - Have a high level of uric acid in your blood
 - Are age 45 or older, a man, or a woman after menopause
 - Are obese
 - Have kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, or high cholesterol
 - Take certain medicines. Examples are diuretics (water pills).
 - Have parents, sisters, or brothers with gout
- A gout attack may be triggered by:
 - Drinking too much alcohol, especially beer or binge drinking
 - Eating large amounts of purine-rich foods
 - Crash diets, especially high-protein fad diets
 - A diet high in fructose (see below)
 - Starting a medicine to lower uric acid, even if it is the right treatment

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Five Lifestyle Guidelines for Gout

- Sudden, severe illness or surgery that puts you in bed for a long time
- Joint injury
- Radiation therapy
- If untreated, gout can lead to permanent joint damage. It can lead to deformed hands and feet. It can cause kidney stones, which are extremely painful. See your doctor right away if you think you may have gout.
- For most people, gout is treated with medicine and lifestyle changes. Follow your doctor's advice. Get your uric acid levels checked twice a year.

Five Lifestyle Guidelines to Prevent or Lessen Gout Attacks—And More!

The lifestyle guidelines below will help you prevent or lessen gout attacks. They will also help you prevent or treat heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and many other health problems.

1. Lose weight if you are overweight or obese.
 - Obese people are four times more likely to have gout than those at a healthy weight.
 - Losing about 1-2 pounds per week can help lower uric acid levels.
 - Beware. Fast weight loss, fasting, or high-protein diets can increase uric acid levels.
 - To lose weight, eat less fat and fewer calories. Walk briskly or do other moderate physical activity for 150 minutes or more per week. Sit less.
 - Talk with your UPMC Health Plan health coach for a healthy weight loss plan.
2. Avoid foods rich in purines. Limit foods with moderate amounts of purines.
 - Avoid beer and grain liquors. Avoid red meat, organ meats, and seafood (especially shrimp and lobster). Avoid yeast supplements.
 - Limit meat, poultry, and fish to 4-6 ounces cooked per day. For most people, three ounces is about the size of the palm of your hand.
3. Eat a balanced diet of mostly low-purine foods.
 - Fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables. Limit fruits as advised below.
 - Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with lean protein foods. Avoid or limit those listed above. Choose plant proteins more often. Examples are cooked dried beans, soy products, and small amounts of nuts.
 - Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with grains. Make at least half of your grains whole.
 - Include 2-3 servings of nonfat or low-fat (1%) milk, yogurt, or cheese per day. Dairy foods are rich in protein but low in purines. They also help your body get rid of uric acid.
 - Choose small amounts of healthy fats (a total of about 3 teaspoons a day). Examples are vegetable oils, tub margarine, mayonnaise, nuts, and seeds. They help reduce inflammation.
 - Limit sugar.

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4. Limit high-fructose foods. Eating large amounts are linked to gout.
 - Fructose is a kind of sugar found naturally in fruit, vegetables, and honey. It is also added to many processed foods and drinks.
 - Limit fruit juice to ½ cup per day. Choose whole fruits instead. Limit fruit to a total of 1-2 cups per day. These are especially high in fructose: apples, cherries, dates, grapes, peaches, pears, plum, and prunes.
 - Limit foods with fructose or high-fructose corn syrup on the label. Examples are many sweetened drinks including soft drinks, fruit drinks, and sports drinks, fruits canned in syrup, and many breakfast cereals, baked goods, desserts, candy, processed and fast foods.

5. Drink at least 8 cups (8 ounces each) of fluid a day. Make half or more water.
 - Fluids may help flush uric acid from your body.
 - To make a habit of drinking more water: Drink a glass when you first wake up and before, with, and after each meal. Drink water while you work.

Don't let gout get in your way. Do whatever you can to lessen and prevent gout attacks. And keep in mind that your overall health will benefit too!

Take Action

1. Keep a food diary. Write down everything you eat and drink and the amounts. Look for what may trigger a gout attack for you.
2. Choose one of the guidelines above. Make a plan below to put it into action this week. Be specific. Example: "On Saturday I will buy a 32-ounce (4-cup) water bottle. I will record how many bottles I drink per day. I will aim to drink at least one bottle while I'm at a work."



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