



Therapy Services Fact Sheet

Gout

What is Gout?

Gout has previously been known as the “disease of kings” and the “king of diseases”.

It has also been called the “drunk man’s disease”.

This latter misconception has led many non-alcoholic drinkers (especially females) to gasp in disbelief when they are told that they have gout!

What Causes Gout?

An excess of uric acid in the body causes gout. This can happen in three different ways, either separately or in combination:

1. By an increase in production of uric acid by the body.
2. By under-elimination of uric acid by the kidneys.
3. By an increased intake of foods containing purines, which are metabolised to uric acid in the body.

Meat (especially organ meats such as brains, liver, kidneys), poultry, fish (shellfish, sardines), liver, kidney, brains, dried peas and beans are particularly high in purines.

It is also true to some degree that alcoholic beverages can precipitate gout attacks.

Elevated levels of uric acid in the blood may lead to deposits around the joints. Needle-like crystals may form in the joints leading to acute gout attacks.

Uric acid may also collect under the skin as tophi or in the urinary tract as kidney stones.

Diagnosis

Since several other kinds of conditions can mimic a gout attack, proper diagnosis is essential to treat the symptoms.

Your General Practitioner or Podiatrist can help you with this diagnosis.

Treatment

Modification of your diet to reduce purine intake may be all that is needed.

In addition to this, medications such as colchicine and allopurinol can be prescribed to prevent or relieve attacks.

Recently, non-steroidal anti inflammatory drugs have been used for acute attacks of gout if colchicine causes unwanted side effects.

If you have any questions about gout, contact your General Practitioner or Podiatrist.



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing