

Symptoms and Treatment for Gout or Joint Swelling

Gout is a disease that results from an overload of **uric acid** in the body. This overload of **uric acid** leads to the formation of tiny crystals of urate that deposit in tissues of the body, especially the joints. When crystals form in the joints, it causes recurring attacks of joint inflammation (arthritis). Gout is considered a chronic and progressive disease. Chronic gout can also lead to deposits of difficult piles of uric acid in the tissues, particularly in and around the joints and may cause joint destruction, decreased kidney function, and kidney stones (nephrolithiasis).



Gout has the unique distinction of being one of the most frequently recorded medical illnesses throughout history. It is often associated with a great inherited abnormality in the body's ability to process uric acid. Uric acid is a breakdown product of **purines** which have been part of many foods we eat. An abnormality in managing uric acid can cause attacks of painful osteoarthritis (gout attack), kidney stones, and also blockage of the kidney-filtering tubules with uric acid crystals, leading to kidney failure.

On the other hand, some people may only produce elevated blood **uric acid levels** (hyperuricemia) with out manifestations of gout, such as arthritis or kidney problems. The state of elevated levels of uric acid in the blood without symptoms is referred to as asymptomatic hyperuricemia. Asymptomatic hyperuricemia is considered a precursor state to the development of gout. The word gout refers the disease that is caused by an overload of uric acid in the body, resulting in painful arthritic attacks and deposits of lumps of uric acid crystals in body tissues.

Gouty arthritis is normally an extremely painful attack with a rapid onset of joint inflammation. The joint inflammation is actually brought on by build up of uric acid crystals in the joint fluid (synovial fluid) and joint lining (synovial lining). Intense joint irritation occurs as the immune system acts, causing white blood cells to be able to engulf the uric acid crystals and chemical messengers of inflammation to be launched, leading to pain, heat, and redness of the joint tissues. As gout progresses, the attacks of gouty arthritis generally occur more frequently and often in additional joints.

Symptoms of Gout:

The small joint at the base of the big toe is the most common site of an acute **gout attack** of arthritis. An acute attack of gouty arthritis at the bottom of the big toe is medically known as podagra. Other important joints that are commonly affected include the ankles, knees, wrists, fingers, and elbows. Acute gout attacks tend to be characterized by a rapid onset of pain in the affected shared followed by warmth, swelling, reddish discoloration, and marked tenderness.

- Tenderness can be intense so that even a blanket pressing the skin over the affected joint can be unbearable.
- Individuals can develop fever with the acute gout attacks.
- These painful attacks usually subside in hours to days, with or without medication.
- In rare instances, another panic attack can last for weeks.
- The majority of patients with gout get each year repeated attacks of arthritis through the years.

Uric Acid Deposits can Deposit in Little Fluid-Filled Sacs (Bursae) Around the Joints

These urate crystals can incite inflammation in the bursae, leading to pain and swelling around the joints (a condition known as bursitis). In rare instances, gout leads to a more chronic type of joint inflammation that mimics rheumatoid arthritis.

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Chronic (tophaceous) gout, nodular masses of uric acid crystals (tophi) deposit in different soft-tissue areas of the body. Even though they are most commonly discovered as hard nodules around the fingers, at the tips of the elbows, in the hand, and around the big toe, tophi nodules can appear anywhere in the body. They have been reported in unexpected areas such as in the vocal cords or (rarely) even around the spinal cord. When tophi appear in the tissues, the gout condition is felt in order to represent an amazing overload of uric acid within the body.

Treatment for Gout:

There are two key principles essential to dealing with gout. First, it is critical to cease the acute inflammation of joints suffering from gouty arthritis. Second, it is important to address the long-term management of the disease in order to prevent future gouty arthritis attacks and shrink **gouty tophi** crystal deposits in the tissues.



GoutUricUric AcidGouty ArthritisGout AttacksUric Acid

The treatment of an acute attack of gouty arthritis involves measures and medications that reduce inflammation. Preventing future acute gout attacks is equally as important as treating the acute arthritis. Protection against acute gout involves maintaining enough fluid intake, weight reduction, dietary changes, reduction in alcohol consumption, and medications to reduce the **uric acid level** in the bloodstream (reduce hyperuricemia).

Maintaining Adequate Fluid Intake Helps Prevent Acute Gout Attacks

Adequate fluid intake also decreases the risk of kidney stone formation in patients with gout. Alcohol is known to have diuretic effects that can contribute to dehydration and precipitate acute gout attacks. Alcohol can also affect uric acid metabolism to result in hyperuricemia. Therefore, alcohol has two major effects that aggravate gout by impeding (slowing down) the excretion of uric acid from the filtering system as well as by causing dehydration, each of which contribute to the precipitation of uric acid crystals in the joints.

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