

## Gout

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Gout is a form of arthritis. It creates inflammation and severe pain in the joints. It can occur in one to two joints at a time, and is common in the feet and ankles, most commonly in the big toe. Red and shiny skin over the joint is also a symptom of gout. Gout occurs in "flare ups" or episodes. It can come on over night and lasts approximately a week. It is possible to have months between episodes. As the disease progresses attacks become more frequent

An increased level of uric acid is believed to be the cause of gout. Uric acid is normally dissolved in the blood stream, however when uric acid is elevated, not all of it can dissolve and it forms crystals in the joints. Some reasons for having a high uric acid level include: genetics, obesity, increased alcohol intake, consumption of food containing purines, or in some cases high blood pressure medication.

Treatment for gout is first to decrease the level of uric acid. Purines are broken down into uric acid. Purines are found in foods such as: red meat, shell fish, red wine, and beans. Decreasing alcohol intake, weight loss and altering medications will also decrease the level of uric acid. Treatment of acute episodes involves anti-inflammatory medication. Rest and elevation of the affected joint is also helpful to decrease swelling.

The above is intended as general information only. Be sure to contact your physician for advice or your own specific medical problems.