

What is gout?

Gout is a kind of arthritis caused by uric acid crystals forming in one or more joints. Uric acid is a substance that forms when your body breaks down a substance called purines. This substance normally dissolves in your blood and passes through your kidneys into your urine. In people who have gout, uric acid builds up and can then form sharp crystals in the joint space. This causes pain and swelling in the affected joints.

Who can develop gout?

If you eat a lot of foods that are rich in purines, you may be at an increased risk for gout. Some of these foods are salmon, sardines, organ meats, asparagus, mushrooms and herring.

You are more likely to develop gout if you're overweight, drink excessive amounts of alcohol or have high cholesterol, diabetes or high blood pressure. Men develop gout more often than women. Women are more likely to develop gout after menopause. Gout is also hereditary (which means it runs in families).

What is a gout attack like?

The symptoms of gout may be sudden. They usually start at night, often in the big toe joint (but can also occur in the joints of the feet, ankles, knees, hands and wrists). The affected joint becomes red, feels hot and hurts. The joint hurts more when you touch it.

How do I change my diet?

Start by learning which of the foods that you eat are high in purine. Try to avoid eating high-purine foods and limit the amount of moderate-purine foods you eat. See the chart below for some suggestions.

Avoid	Limit	Enjoy
Beer	Chicken, beef, pork and duck	At least 12 cups of fluid, such as water or fruit juice
Soft drinks that contain sugar	Crab, lobster, oysters and shrimp	Low-fat and fat-free dairy products, such as cheese and yogurt
Fatty food	Lunch meats, especially high-fat versions	Eggs (in moderation)
Organ meats, such as liver, from any animal source	Liquor	Peanut butter and nuts
Bacon, veal and venison		Rice, noodles, pasta and potatoes
Yeast		Fruits
Anchovies, sardines, herring, mussels, codfish, scallops, trout and haddock		Vegetables
Gravy		Beans
		Wine (in moderation)

Coffee (in moderation)