



Ten Things You May Not Know About Gout

Gout is considered one of the most painful forms of arthritis. It usually affects the big toe, occurring most often in middle-aged men. Gout is caused by abnormally high levels of uric acid in the blood. Uric acid is a naturally occurring chemical produced when the body breaks down purines, an organic compound found in the body and in most foods.

The excess uric acid is deposited into the joints and tissues, forming needle-sharp crystals which trigger pain and inflammation. Over time, uric acid can also form deposits called gout tophi – chalky, whitish lumps under the skin or in the joints, bones and cartilage. Tophi commonly occur on the ears, fingers, toes, ankle and elbow.

Here are ten things you may not know about gout, even if you are a gout sufferer:

- 1) Gout is known to be affected by diet, particularly foods and beverages high in purines such as meat, seafood, beer and wine. However, Mayo Clinic experts now say taking medications for gout can reduce the need for dietary restrictions.
- 2) A large, long-term study demonstrated that some high purine foods that gout sufferers have traditionally been told to avoid are not associated with attacks of gout, including mushrooms, peas, beans, cauliflower and spinach. The researchers also discovered that eating low fat dairy products can decrease the risk of gout attacks.
- 3) It is not always high levels of uric acid that bring on a gout attack. Often, a rapid change in uric acid levels (up or down) can trigger gout.
- 4) Pseudogout mimics the symptoms of gout, but is a completely different condition. It is possible to have both gout and pseudogout at the same time. Both are treated with the same gout medications.
- 5) Apple cider vinegar and honey have long been used as a home remedy for gout. Other popular home remedies include cherries, baking soda, and soaking the affected foot (or the entire body) in a bath with Epsom salts.
- 6) The plant goutweed (also known as ground elder and pigweed) got its name from its use as a gout treatment in the middle ages. It is very invasive, and is now considered a nuisance plant.
- 7) Colchicine, a drug used to treat gout since the 1930s, was not FDA approved as a solitary gout medication until 2009. Upon approval as brand name Colcrys, the cost of the common gout drug

skyrocketed from about 5¢ to \$5 for one colchicine tablet. You can still buy colchicine in an affordable generic form from an online Canadian pharmacy.

- 8) Hair loss and purple patches on the skin can be rare side effects of colchicine. The most common colchicine side effects are gastrointestinal upsets like nausea, stomach pain and diarrhea.
- 9) People with gout should not take aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid), as it can elevate uric acid levels.
- 10) Lead poisoning can be a risk factor for gout, as can diabetes, surgery, and vitamins A and B3.

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