Facts About Gout

Presented by the Rheumatology Division at Hospital for Special Surgery

8.3 million people in the US have gout*

- Men: 6.1 million
- Women: 2.2 million

Gout happens when there’s too much uric acid in the body, forming crystals that the immune system attacks. This causes inflammation and pain in the joints.

Gout is a genetic disease. Of people with gout:

- 90% have kidneys that don’t remove enough uric acid through urine
- 10% make too much uric acid in their system

90% of gout attacks start in a single joint, most often the “bunion joint” of the big toe. Quick treatment is important to keep gout under control. Having a plan in place with your doctor is a good idea.

Gout is chronic and progressive. Attacks become worse and more frequent. Even if there is a quiet period after a first attack, future attacks are likely.

Gout is “curable” in most people. Almost all will need to remain on medication, which is usually very well tolerated.

9 out of 10 gout patients have at least one or more of the following medical conditions that make managing gout more difficult:**

- kidney dysfunction
- coronary heart disease
- obesity
- high cholesterol
- diabetes

Important elements of a gout-prevention diet:

- Limiting shellfish
- Limiting red meat and organ meats such as liver
- Limiting high-fructose corn syrup
- Limiting all types of alcohol, especially beer

Weight loss, if needed, can also help prevent gout.

Vitamin C has been shown to have a small effect at helping the body remove uric acid. The effect of cherry juice has been shown to be small or negligible.

References
