DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
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Family and Consumer Sciences

FSFCS209

My Doctor Says I Have Gout: Where Do I Start?

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What is Gout?

Gout is a form of arthritis caused by a build-up of uric acid in the blood. This builds up uric acid and causes crystals to form and accumulate in and around joints.

What are Purines?

Purines are natural chemical substances found in your body and in some foods and drinks. Uric acid is produced when the body breaks down purines. Uric acid is typically eliminated from your body in urine. In people with gout, this process is altered, so uric acid builds up in the blood forming crystals that settle in joints. Other foods and drinks influence the amount of uric acid in your blood, for example, fructose, a type of sugar, generates uric acid within minutes of being ingested.

Why do I Need a Gout Diet?

The gout diet is low in purines, so while you can't control the amount of purines that occur naturally in your body, you can control how much purines you consume, and therefore, lower the amount of uric acid your body produces. This will help control the pain from gout. It won't cure your gout and you may still need medication, but it can lower the risk of recurring gout attacks and slow the progression of joint damage.

What are the Goals of the Gout Diet?

The gout diet is designed to help you achieve a healthy weight and good eating habits, avoid foods high in purines, and control uric acid levels.

General Diet Principles

PRINCIPLE	RATIONALE
Weight Loss	Being at a healthy weight decreases the risk of developing gout. Weight reduction if overweight lowers uric acid levels and reduces the number of gout attacks. Weight loss lessens overall stress on joints.
Complex Carbs	Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Avoid foods with simple sugars like high-fructose corn syrup and limit naturally sweet fruit juices for weight reduction to decrease uric acid levels and lessen weight to reduce stress on joints.
Water	Stay well-hydrated for overall good health.
Fats	Reduce saturated fats from red meat, fatty poultry and high-fat dairy products for weight reduction to decrease uric acid levels and lessens weight to reduce stress on joints.
Proteins	Focus on lean meat and poultry, low-fat dairy, and lentils for protein.

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Specific Foods and Supplement Recommendations

About one-third of your uric acid comes from your diet, so if you have gout, it's important to avoid high-purine foods and drinks. You may also be prescribed a uric acid-lowering medication by your doctor. The table below contains examples of gout-friendly foods and some you should try to limit or avoid.

	EAT LOW-PURINE FOODS/DRINKS	AVOID OR LIMIT SERVING SIZES HIGH-PURINE FOODS/DRINKS
Meat	**Up to 170 g/day** • White chicken meat	• Beef • Pork • Lamb • Offal • Meat-based gravies • Liver • Kidney • Sweetbreads
Seafood	**Up to 170 g/day** • Salmon • Flounder • Sole • Catfish • Canned light tuna	• Anchovies • Sardines • Roe (fish eggs) • Herring • Cod • Trout • Haddock • Shellfish (shrimp, mussels, scallops, lobster)
Vegetables	• Tomatoes • Potatoes • Celery • Squash • Peppers • Root vegetables (yams, carrots, beets) • Asparagus* • Spinach*	• Peas • Cauliflower • Mushrooms • *Studies have shown that vegetables high in purines, like asparagus and spinach, don't increase the risk of gout or recurring gout attacks. The nutritional benefit of asparagus and spinach are high, so these vegetables can be part of a healthy gout diet.
Fruits	• Apples • Pears • Strawberries • Blueberries • Cherries • Peaches • Olives	
Beverages	• Coffee • Tea • Water • 100% fruit juice	• Alcoholic drinks • Fizzy drinks and juices with high fructose content • Moderate consumption of wine does not appear to increase the risk of gout attacks. • Avoid alcohol during gout attacks. • Limit alcohol serving sizes, especially beer, between attacks.
Dairy	• Cheese • Skim milk	
Other	• Eggs • Tofu • Nut butters (peanut, almond) • Whole grain breads and cereals • Chocolate and cocoa • Brown rice • Quinoa • Pasta • Barley • Nuts and seeds	• Dried beans • Lentils • Oats • Jarred sauces and condiments with high sugar content • Cereals and cereal bars high in sugar • Breads not made with whole grains
Vitamin C	**Vitamin C may lower uric acid levels. Ask your doctor about a 500 mg Vitamin C supplement.**	
Coffee	**Research shows that moderate intakes of regular caffeinated coffee may be associated with a reduced risk of gout but may not be appropriate with other medical conditions like a fast heart rate. Talk to your doctor to ask if coffee is right for you.**	
Cherries	**There is some evidence that eating cherries is associated with a reduced risk of gout attacks.**	

Sample Menu

Here is an example of what you might eat on a typical day.

BREAKFAST

- Whole-grain, unsweetened cereal with skim or low-fat milk
- 1 cup fresh strawberries
- Coffee
- Water

LUNCH

- Roasted chicken breast slices (2 ounces) on a whole-grain roll with mustard
- Mixed green salad with vegetables, 1 tablespoon nuts, and balsamic vinegar and olive oil dressing
- Skim or low-fat milk or water

AFTERNOON SNACK

- 1 cup fresh cherries
- Water

DINNER

- Roasted salmon (3 to 4 ounces)
- Roasted or steamed green beans
- 1/2 to 1 cup whole-grain pasta with olive oil and lemon pepper
- Water
- Low-fat yogurt
- 1 cup fresh melon
- Caffeine-free beverage, such as herbal tea

Remember, following a gout diet can help limit uric acid production. Along with gout medication, the gout diet will help decrease pain from gout, decrease the number of gout attacks, and damage your joints. This is not a cure for gout but can help improve your overall health and contribute to helping achieve and maintain a healthy weight when combined with limiting calories and getting regular physical activity.

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