

## Symptom Control - Dietary Advice for People with Gout

*This dietary advice sheet gives some general information to help you make the recommended changes to your diet. If you need more detailed advice, or if you are following a special diet that makes it difficult to make these changes, please ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian.*

Gout occurs when a chemical called uric acid in your blood forms crystals in your joints causing swelling and pain.

Drug treatment is usually very effective at reducing the symptoms and preventing further attacks.

Diet has a small but important role to play. Being overweight can increase your risk of gout and some people with gout are also at increased risk of heart disease. Both of these problems can be helped by changes to diet and lifestyle.

### **Eating a healthy diet is a good place to start**

A variety of foods from the 4 main food groups should be eaten everyday.

- Plenty of fruit and vegetables
- A moderate amount of starchy foods, bread, potatoes, pasta, rice and cereals
- Moderate amounts of meat and fish
- Moderate amounts of dairy foods, milk, cheese and yogurt

For further advice on a healthy diet visit the Heron website [www.heron.nhs.uk](http://www.heron.nhs.uk) and look in the patients information section for the leaflet on Healthy Eating.

### **Will losing weight help to stop an attack of gout?**

Gradual weight loss can help to reduce uric acid levels. Losing weight quickly should be avoided as this causes cells in the body to break down which leads to a sudden rise in uric acid levels. A combination of balanced healthy eating and regular physical activity is the best way to lose weight safely.

For further advice on losing weight visit the Heron website [www.heron.nhs.uk](http://www.heron.nhs.uk) and look in the patients information section for the leaflet on Weight Management.

### **Are there any foods that should be avoided?**

Uric acid is formed from purines. You should aim to limit foods that have a high purine content, see list below:

Foods highest in purines (150-1,000mg/100g)	Foods high in purines (50-150mg/100g)	Foods lowest in purines (0-50mg/100g)
Anchovies	Other shellfish – crab, shrimps	Milk
Sardines	Eel	Nuts
Mackerel	Meat – beef, lamb, pork, veal	Eggs
Sweetbreads and some meats (veal, young beef, lamb, pork)	Game – rabbit, venison, pheasant	Cheese
Brain	Poultry – chicken, duck, turkey	Pasta, noodles
Kidney	Other fish – trout, herring, whitebait	Bread and cereals except wholegrains (moderately high)
Liver	Meat soups	Cakes and biscuits
Heart	Legumes, beans, lentils, peas, soya	chocolate
Meat extract e.g. Oxo	Asparagus	Ice cream
Scallops	Cauliflower	Fats – butter, margarine
Mussels	Mushrooms	
Goose	Spinach	
Fish roe	Wheatgerm and bran	
Yeast extract e.g. marmite	Mycoprotein (Quorn)	

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### **Are there any foods that should be avoided? (cont)**

The purines in meat, fish and shellfish are more likely to lead to gout rather than the purines in vegetarian foods such as Quorn, beans and lentils and the vegetables that appear on the list.

You don't need to cut out meat and fish altogether but aim to have smaller helpings, 75-100g (3-4oz) for a main meal, 25-50g (1-2oz) for a snack meal. Cheese and eggs are lower in purines but cheese is high in fat so don't have this too often if you are trying to lose weight.

Some people find that particular foods trigger gout even though they are not high in purines, if this happens then it is probably best to avoid them.

### **Are there any foods I should eat more of?**

As already mentioned, eating less meat and fish and, instead, having more vegetarian foods or cheese and egg meals may be beneficial.

Some studies have shown that supplements of Vitamin C can lower uric acid levels but the amount in the supplement is far more than would usually be eaten in the diet. High doses of Vitamin C can interact with medications and may cause stomach upsets. If you want to consider taking a supplement please discuss this with your GP.

The supplement dose is 500 – 1500mg per day (compared with the daily recommended intake of 40mg per day).

### **How much should I drink?**

It is important to have plenty to drink as this will reduce the risk of uric acid crystals forming. At least 1-1.5 litres (8-10 glasses or mugs) per day is recommended. All drinks, except alcohol, count towards this amount, you do not just have to drink water. Limit your intake of sugary soft drinks and fruit juice if you are trying to lose weight, try sugar free squash and diet/zero fizzy drinks instead.

### **What about alcohol?**

Alcohol can increase your risk of developing gout and can bring on a sudden attack if you already suffer from gout.

Beer seems to cause more problems than wine or spirits and binge drinking may also trigger an attack.

You do not need to give up alcohol altogether but a reduction in alcohol will be important for you to consider, especially if you drink more than the recommended limit of 21 units per week for men and 14 units per week for women.

1 unit is

- ½ pint 3-4% beer, lager, cider
- 1 single measure (25ml) of spirit
- 1 single measure (50ml) of sherry or fortified wine
- A bottle of 12% wine is approximately 9 units, a 175ml glass of a 12% wine is approximately 2 units.

For further information

UK Gout Society.

Web: [www.ukgoutsociety.org](http://www.ukgoutsociety.org)

e-mail: [info@ukgoutsociety.org](mailto:info@ukgoutsociety.org)

