

Gout Diet: The Best and Worst Foods for Your Menu

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Drink More Water

Gout is caused by uric acid buildup. Plenty of water may help flush out the uric acid. Some nutritionists recommend eight cups a day of liquids, at least half of them being water.



Choose a Diet You Can Live With

If you are overweight, losing weight can protect you from gout flare-ups. However, losing weight fast can do more harm than good for gout, as rapid weight loss can raise uric acid levels in your bloodstream. Avoid fad diets and "crash" diets. Consider consulting a dietician, who can help you choose a diet plan that works for you.



Avoid (Most) Purines

Purines are natural chemicals found in many common foods, especially some meats, vegetables, and legumes like beans. People whose diets are rich in some purines have a higher risk of gout attacks.

Studies suggest that purines found in meats and seafoods may provoke gout episodes in some people. Diets rich in animal purines are five times more likely to lead to gout than diets rich in plant purines. Indeed, the purines from plants that we eat have not been shown to present any greater gout risk.



Eat Plenty of Fruits

As plant-based foods, fruits are healthy for your body. You should aim to eat at least five fruits and vegetables every day. Even fruits that are high in fructose can be enjoyed in moderation without provoking gout flares. Although some studies have shown that fruit juice can provoke gout attacks, this has not been supported by all research.



Cherries for Gout

Eating cherries or cherry extract may help you control gout flares. A large study of more than 600 people with recurring gout looked at how cherries influence gout frequency. People who reported eating cherries or cherry extract were significantly less likely to experience gout over the following two days. The study found that one to two servings of cherries per day seemed to confer the maximum benefit.



Avoid Sweets and Sodas

Unlike fruit with its natural sugar, artificial sugars are widely recognized as gout flare dangers. Consuming too many sugary sodas has been found to provoke attacks, but no association has been found with artificially sweetened sodas. Other foods loaded with high-fructose corn syrup can also bring on gout pain.



Be Choosy About Carbs

Carbs can be helpful or harmful to your gout health. The most helpful carbs are found in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes. Sweet potatoes, beans, apples, and popcorn can all be served in wholesome and delicious ways as part of a healthy gout diet. Other carbs come as natural and refined sugars. Candy, sports drinks, some breakfast cereal, and some pasta sauces all contribute to dietary sugar from unhealthy carbs.



Avoid Some Fish

Some fish are considered high-purine foods. In particular, large saltwater fish like tuna, swordfish, and marlin may have enough purines to provoke gout flares. However, the omega-3 content found in many fish has been found to potentially relieve the effects of fish purine. The dosage may be more than found naturally, and may require quality fish oil supplements.



Go Easy on Alcohol

Alcohol can raise your gout risk. Beer is high in a type of purine that is easy for your body to absorb, and hard liquor has been shown to elevate gout risk too. Some studies find wine drinking raises your risk, but others have found that moderate wine drinking does not.



Enjoy Coffee

Several studies suggest that regular coffee-drinking can lower your long-term gout risk. This is true for both decaf and caffeinated coffee, although the improvement seems to be stronger with caffeine. On the other hand, some studies have found that women who drink coffee have more uric acid in their blood, which is thought to be a cause of gout attacks. More research is needed to see whether this influences women's risk of gout pain.



Eat Less Meat

Fish, poultry, and other meat should be eaten in moderation to avoid gout attacks. Some nutritionists recommend four to six ounces a day of these foods.

Some meats are higher in purines than others, and should be avoided altogether for people with recurring gout. High-purine meats include:

- Bacon
- Organ meats (kidneys, livers, sweetbreads, etc.)
- Wild game
- Meat sauces such as gravy



Most Soy Should Be Fine

Soy foods like tofu, soy milk, and edamame have moderate amounts of purines. Traditionally doctors have cautioned against eating too much soy for people with gout. One study found that soybeans, soymilk, and soy powder increased uric acid in the blood significantly. However, larger population studies have recently told a different story. Several have reported that not only are soy products harmless for gout patients, but also people who eat more soy tend to have a reduced gout risk.



Try Low-Fat Dairy

Despite being high in protein, dairy foods like cheese, milk, and yogurt are low in purines. Diets high in dairy protect against gout. The healthy influence is stronger when you choose low-fat dairy options, such as 1% milk and low-fat cottage cheese. Eating dairy helps your body eliminate uric acid, as shown in several trials.



You Can't Avoid All Purines

There are too many sources of purines to eliminate them all from your diet. You will stay healthier overall if you eat some foods with purines. Remember that vegetable purines have never been shown to promote gout attacks, and that low-fat dairy products are protein sources that lower your risk of gout pain. People with gout can still enjoy meat in moderation, but should limit meat, fish, and poultry to 4 to 6 ounces a day.



Sources:

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