



The Gout Diet: MYTH vs. FACT

Diet can play a role in gout management – but the role it should play is over-prioritized by many patients. In fact, half of those with gout say that making changes to their diet is the first step they take to manage the disease – even ahead of taking medications to lower their uric acid levels and maintaining an overall healthy fitness level. One in three with gout also incorrectly believes that flares can be completely avoided by eliminating certain foods.

While those with gout are encouraged to follow a healthy and balanced diet, proper gout management also includes taking steps to lower uric acid levels to 6.0 mg/dL or below and making other healthy lifestyle changes.

MYTH: THERE IS A STRICT “GOUT DIET” THAT PEOPLE WITH GOUT SHOULD FOLLOW.

FACT: While certain foods have been known to trigger gout flares, there is not a regimented “gout diet.” But living with gout does mean making choices that are smart for you – and everyone in the family. That includes limiting how much you consume of certain types of foods and beverages.

Foods high in purines – chemicals that increase the amount of uric acid in the blood – should be eaten in moderation and completely avoided during flares.

- Red meat, lamb and
- Organ meats (liver, kidneys, sweetbreads)
- Seafood/shellfish (shrimp, lobster, muscles, anchovies, sardines)
- Beer and grain liquors

It’s also important to avoid products with high-fructose corn syrup. Limit these:

- Soft drinks and sweetened fruit juices
- Sugary cereals, store-bought baked goods
- Ice cream and candy
- Processed foods

A healthy diet for people with gout starts with fresh and colorful fruits and vegetables – oranges, bananas, peppers and broccoli – and includes whole grain rice, pasta and bread. Low and non-fat dairy products, like milk, cheese and yogurt, are great sources of protein – as well as chicken and certain types of fish, like salmon. While fruits are encouraged, many naturally contain high fructose levels and should be limited to one or two cups per day.

Because each situation is unique, it may be helpful to keep track of the specific foods and beverages that trigger gout flares. Your physician or a dietitian may have other recommendations about food choices and meal planning, depending on other health issues you may have.



MYTH: GOUT CAN BE SUCCESSFULLY MANAGED WITH DIET CHANGES ALONE.

FACT: Even with extremely rigid diet restrictions, most gout patients will only be able to lower their uric acid levels slightly – as little as 1.0 mg/dL. This is not nearly enough to control flares and reduce risk for long-term damage from gout. While maintaining a healthy and balanced diet is important, most people with gout will need to be placed on a long-term uric acid-lowering therapy in order to achieve healthy levels of 6.0 mg/dL or below – the target uric acid level recommended by the American College of Rheumatology and Gout & Uric Acid Education Society.

MYTH: CHERRY JUICE IS AN EFFECTIVE GOUT TREATMENT.

FACT: The role that cherry juice plays in gout management is overstated. While Vitamin C – which is found in cherry juice or cherries – can play a role in lowering uric acid levels, consuming cherry juice alone is not going to be enough. Furthermore, if patients are drinking cherry juice that is sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup, that can even contribute to or worsen a flare. Your physician may recommend simply taking 500-1000 milligrams of Vitamin C per day, in addition to your daily uric acid-lowering medication.

If you have gout, remember to #GoForSix. Talk to your doctor about getting your uric acid levels checked every six months – and aim for a healthy 6 mg/dL or below.

Learn more at GoutEducation.org.

