

## Find out more about gout

Did you know that in Canada, about 3% of adults have gout? As we age, our chances of developing gout increase as well. While both men and women can have gout, men are four times more likely to develop gout than women.

### What is gout?

Gout is a type of arthritis that occurs because of *high levels of uric acid* in the blood. This causes severe joint pain and swelling (usually in the big toe) and may also increase the risk of kidney stones.

The amount of uric acid in your blood depends on a few factors:

1. The amount that is naturally made in your body.
2. The amount your body gets rid of through the kidneys.
3. The amount of purine you eat. This is because uric acid is formed when your body breaks down purine.

In a healthy body, the kidneys remove uric acid through urine. In a person with gout, the body either makes too much uric acid or the kidneys cannot get rid of uric acid properly. Uric acid then builds up in the blood and forms crystals, which get deposited in the joints. This causes painful inflammation (sometimes called a gouty attack).

Although we get purine from our diet, eating too much purine will not cause high levels of uric acid in the body. It is often recommended that people limit foods that are high in purines, but there are no specific foods that need to be avoided.

Your food choices can help your body get rid of uric acid and lower the amount of uric acid it makes.

Gout can be controlled with medication, healthy food choices and maintaining a healthy weight.

## Risk factors:

The following risk factors increase the chances of developing gout:

- Obesity
- High alcohol intake
- Some medications (e.g. high doses of aspirin, diuretics)
- Some cancers and blood diseases
- Chronic kidney disease
- Family history

## Gout and nutrition

Use [Canada's Food Guide](#) to help you make choices that may lower your risk of developing gout or having another gouty attack. Here are some healthy eating tips:

1. Eat 2-3 servings of meat and meat alternatives per day. Higher meat and seafood intakes may increase uric acid levels and your risk of gout. Pay attention to the serving sizes recommended in Canada's Food Guide.

Healthy servings are:

- 75 g (2.5 oz) of cooked meat, fish or poultry
- 2 eggs
- 175 mL (3/4 cup) of cooked legumes
- 150 g (3/4 cup) tofu
- 30 mL (2 tbsp) of nut butters.

2. Have 2-3 servings from the milk and alternatives food group each day. Milk and milk products, especially those that are lower in fat, may lower the chance of a gouty attack. They may also help the body get rid of uric acid. Some good choices include low fat milk (1 cup or 250 mL), low fat yogurt (175 g or  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup) or low fat cheese (50 g or 1.5 oz).
3. Make water your first choice. Drink 2-3 L of fluids each day, and at least half from water. If you enjoy coffee, drink it in moderation, so less than 750 mL (3 cups) per day.
4. Limit high sugary beverages such as pop and fruit drinks. A higher intake of sugar-sweetened beverages may increase your uric acid level and risk of gout.
5. Choose whole fruit and vegetables more often than juice. For more on healthy food choices and a handout on gout, call EatRight Ontario at 1-877-510-510-2 or send an [email](#).

## Alcohol and gout

Limit the amount of alcohol you drink. If you have gout, you may choose not to drink alcohol at all. If you consume alcohol, limit the amount you drink to:

10 drinks a week for women (not breastfeeding or pregnant), with no more than 2 drinks a day most days.

15 drinks a week for men, with no more than 3 drinks a day on most days.

Keep in mind that one drink is:

341 mL (12 oz.) bottle of 5% beer,

142 mL (5 oz.) glass of 12% wine, or

43 mL (1.5 oz.) shot of spirits

Alcohol, especially beer and hard liquor, may increase uric acid levels in the body and increase the chance of another gouty attack. Wine does not seem to have the same effect. If you are unsure about alcohol use, talk to your doctor.

## Gout and your weight

Being overweight or obese increases your chance of having gout and gouty attacks. Speak to your doctor or a Registered Dietitian about how you can reach a healthy body weight. If you are overweight, aim for a gradual weight loss of 1-2 lbs per week (1/2-1 kg).

You can do this by:

Making healthy food choices by following Canada's Food Guide. Also, visit [My Menu Planner](#) for meal plans to help you get started.

Choose high fibre foods like [whole grains](#), vegetables and fruit.

Watch your [portion sizes](#).

Get active with 150 minutes of physical activity a week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more. If you're new to activity, speak to your doctor before you get started.

## Myth busters! Eating cherries will not prevent a gout attack.

You may have heard that eating cherries is a good strategy to prevent gout. Cherries are a delicious and healthy choice, but there is not enough research to recommend that they should be used to reduce the risk of gout attacks.

For more information:

Read here for more on [men's health](#) and [healthy aging](#). [Arthritis: Five common myths are busted](#) [Tips for getting active at any age](#) Visit the [The Arthritis Society](#) for more on [gout](#).