



## 24.27 Gout: A Guide for Employees

### Introduction

Gout is a form of inflammatory arthritis. It can cause sudden and intense joint pain, often in the big toe, but can also affect other joints such as ankles, knees and other joints such as fingers & toes. It can make standing and walking extremely painful and is more common in men over 40 and menopausal women.

### What causes Gout?

Gout is caused by high levels of Uric Acid in a person's body that may crystallise in some joints. Uric acid is a byproduct of the body breaking down Purines which are found in the body's cells and in high levels in foods such as red meat, some seafood, fizzy pop and beer. The crystals are typically spikey or sharp in nature and form when the kidneys don't excrete Urea in the way they should or if a person consumes a diet high in Purines.



### What can I do?

If you are suffering mild or occasional symptoms, you may first wish to try and manage it yourself. There are a few things that might help, including:

#### Changes in diet

- A well-balanced diet, such as a Mediterranean Diet may help prevent attacks.
- For some, losing weight might help.
- If your diet is high in Purines, such as with an American Diet, try to introduce more variety.

#### Taking over-the-counter medication:

Some types of painkillers such as ibuprofen may provide short term relief from painful symptoms but should not be relied on for long term treatment.

### What if these suggestions don't help?

For moderate or severe symptoms, or for mild symptoms that do not respond to self-care, then you should seek review with your family doctor (GP).



## What tests can help confirm a diagnosis of Gout?

A simple blood test to measure Uric Acid levels should help to confirm a diagnosis of Gout.

## What treatments are available?

### Anti Inflammatory medications (NSAIDS):

Naproxen, Colchicine or other anti-inflammatory medications may be prescribed by your GP to try and control pain.

In some cases, Corticosteroids may be prescribed but may have potentially serious side effects.

### Uric Acid lowering medication:

Allopurinol may be prescribed for people who suffer regular attacks of Gout or exhibit signs of joint damage, in conjunction with diet and lifestyle changes.

## The Stigma attached to Gout

Gout sufferers can be the butt of jokes and negative comments. This may cause stress which can contribute to the level of inflammation in your body.

The pain and inflammation associated with Gout may affect a sufferer's mood, particularly when attacks are frequent.

A balanced diet, regular exercise and good quality sleep can help improve your mood. A positive mood will help you to better manage Gout. However, don't be embarrassed to discuss how you feel. If this condition is affecting your general wellbeing or making you feel down, you might wish to discuss these feelings with your Family Doctor (GP).

## Special Considerations

If your symptoms are affecting your ability to do your job, you should raise the issue with your employer or Occupational Health Practitioner. They may be able to suggest some short-term adjustments that could help until such time as your symptoms are under control.

Further information may be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/gout/>

A copy of this & other documentation can be found from <https://mohs.co.uk/resources> or using the QR code at the top of this page.