Why Losing Weight Could Mean Fewer Gout Attacks

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Losing Weight With Gout

As obesity levels continue to rise, so do cases of gout, and now an estimated 8.3 million Americans suffer from the painful arthritic condition. Carrying too much extra weight isn't the only culprit, but it's difficult to deny that there's a strong link between gout and obesity – a diet that encourages weight gain also encourages gout attacks.

Although medication is important for gout control, your lifestyle choices can have an enormous impact, too. Learn how you can reduce your gout risk with a few clever approaches to your menu that you may not have considered, and some easier ways to stay on track for better health.

The Link between Gout and Fat

Obesity doubles your risk of developing gout, and it tends to bring on symptoms earlier in life. Those who are obese when they enter early adulthood can expect to struggle with an elevated gout risk, but they may also notice symptoms a decade earlier than other gout sufferers.

Research into the gout-fat link is ongoing, but experts suspect that insulin resistance is mostly to blame. Carrying too much weight – especially around the middle – leads to insulin resistance, which will result in hyperuricemia, or an abnormally high level of uric acid in the bloodstream. That uric acid is responsible for the painful crystals that form in joints and spark a gout attack.

Losing Weight for Less Pain

Although there's no quick solution for gout, there's no doubt that losing weight will decrease the frequency and severity of your attacks. To begin, focus on eliminating the foods that feed both your gout symptoms and your fat stores:

- **Alcohol –** All alcohol can be problematic if you're prone to gout attacks, but beer is the worst offender. Beer can also lead to more weight around your middle, more dehydration, and a higher uric acid concentration – and all of these can encourage the formation of painful crystals in your joints.
- **Fatty meats** – Purines are directly responsible for gout attacks, and they're in quite a few fatty foods. Organ meat (liver, kidneys), fatty seafood (shrimp, lobster, herring and tuna) and red meat are the worst offenders when it comes to weight gain and gout risk.
- **High fructose corn syrup –** This is a known problem for weight gain, but it's also a top contributor to gout. In fact, fructose is the only carbohydrate known to feed gout attacks, so you should be careful of artificial sources (corn syrup in preserved foods) as well as natural sources (many fruits and their juices).

Although some veggies are high in purines, studies show they don't affect uric acid levels in the same way as animal proteins. In most cases, adding in more veggies to every meal is a great first step to a healthier weight, but

the way you add them – and what they replace – is a big part of the weight loss equation.

Safe Ways to Slim Down with Gout

Losing weight is the end goal, but how you get there matters more than you might think. When you live with a chronic disease, there are other variables to consider, and conditions (or medications) that call for a more careful approach. When you're ready to make a change, keep these three points in mind for fewer complications and better results:

- **Go slow.** You may be tempted to fast, or drastically cut calories, but these extreme measures can actually bring on a gout attack. Instead, add more water to your diet, start slipping in more nutrient-dense ingredients, and get rid of refined sugars. Although it can be a bit uncomfortable to cut out sugar all at once, in a few days you'll find that your body feels much better and the weight will begin to come off quickly.Saturated fat is another clear problem for gout sufferers, but be careful about which fats you cut out: for instance, salmon, avocado and coconut oil are all fairly high in fat, but they also contain an extraordinary amount of important nutrients and incredible health benefits. Get to know which foods offer the "good" fats, and be sure you don't replace saturated fat with chemical-laced low fat alternatives.
- **Balance your menu**. High protein diets for weight loss can be effective, but not for everyone. Eating too much meat – even if it's lean – will lead your body into a state of hyperuricemia if you're already prone to gout.In fact, it's not a good idea to eat too much of any one food; variety and diversity is a better way to restore a healthy balance of nutrients and minerals that will protect against gout attacks. Eat a rainbow of colorful fruits and veggies for the full range of vitamins, and incorporate some non-meat proteins to keep you full and your metabolism working at full speed. In fact, studies have shown that low-fat dairy products can actually prevent gout in the first place.
- **Find the right approach for you.** Losing weight seems to be one of the most difficult tasks for many people, and a big part of the problem is finding a suitable plan for your unique circumstances. Aside from the basic formula of burning more calories than you consume, no method is guaranteed to work for everyone – you have to be realistic and honest about how you eat, and the sacrifices you're willing to make if you're going to be successful.It can be helpful to meet with a dietary counsellor to get started on the right track. If you can first identify your eating style, then you can work with your habits rather than against them. For instance, if you naturally tend to eat a lot at a time, it can be easier for you to switch out certain foods rather than focus immediately on portion control. This method makes it a lot easier to feel fulfilled while you lose weight.There's no reason to let your weight loss goals interfere with your quality of life. A few small changes can make you feel much better in no time at all, and that should be good motivation to keep moving in the right direction. Ramp up your activity level, find new hobbies, and focus on keeping a balanced diet and a balanced life to get rid of your gout risk once and for all.