How Will Gout Affect My Work?

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Working with Gout: What You Need to Know

Gout attacks can be so incredibly debilitating that sometimes, you have to miss work just to deal with the pain. If your work is physical, it's much worse since gout flares can hinder you. The pain is so bad that even the slightest touch can have you cursing the heavens.

Several studies have been conducted to find out the impact of gout on work and results show that the condition *does* have a significant effect. For instance, did you know that gout patients are likely to have more annual absence days than those who don't have gout? 4.56 more absence days to be exact. Or that people with gout are not as productive compared to employees without gout.

Here's another finding that might surprise you. Gout patients who suffer from two or more chronic conditions had lower incomes and a lower level of education compared to those who didn't have gout.

These studies are relatively new, and although they don't necessarily define your career path, it's best to take precaution and arm yourself with a few strategies when working with gout.

Tips for Working with Gout

1. During the Interview

You may be tempted to omit to mention that you have gout since the condition is barely noticeable.

Do yourself and your employer a favor and tell them about your condition before accepting the job. This helps to set the right expectations, and it might just allow your employer to give you the right kind of job that won't affect your productivity.

Of course, this revelation might turn off some employers. Don't give up just yet. Instead of seeing it in a negative light, you can highlight the positive contributions you can bring to the company.

If a job requires physical labor or manual dexterity, be prepared to receive a not-so-favorable response. Sadly, certain limitations come with the diagnosis of gout.

2. Convincing the employer

So the interviewer seems convinced of your skills but is hesitant because of your condition. What do you do? Convince them of course!

If there is even a slight chance that they might hire you, take that opportunity to convince them that you are worth it. Perhaps your gout attacks don't happen that often and you can be at work most days of the year.

Tell your employer about that and provide them with alternatives in case you have to miss work because of a gout flare. Maybe you can telecommute or make it up on weekends? There's plenty of options!

3. Managing Your Gout at Work

You already got the job. Half the battle is over. Now you have to convince your employer that they were right in hiring you. For this, you need to make sure your gout symptoms are under control. Thankfully, gout is a condition that can be managed by making lifestyle changes and taking medication.

It will benefit your health and career path in the long run if you start practicing those good habits as soon as possible. Tell your coworkers about your condition. Most of us are not aware of it, but the habits that we keep are influenced by the people we surround ourselves with.

We can't choose who our coworkers are, and if they decide they like eating meat every lunch and drinking beer every Friday evenings, it can be easy to take that path even though you know it's bad for you.

If you'd like to lessen your chances of taking sick leaves, make sure to keep yourself healthy. Avoid high-purine foods, get your body moving, drink lots of water, take your meds consistently, and you should be fine. Try to avoid getting stressed too since it's been known to trigger gout attacks.

4. When You Have a Gout Attack

During a gout attack, make sure you have all the right medical documentation of your condition.

Follow your doctor's advice with rest days and ask your employer if you can work from home during the time that you are recovering. Have those documents ready once you get back at work.

The more information you're able to provide to your employer, the stronger your case will be, and they won't have any reason to hold your absences against you.

5. Applying for Disability Benefits

Having a hard time looking for employment due to your condition? Applying for disability benefits might be a good idea. If your gout is chronic and it affects a major joint, you could qualify for benefits under the U.S. Social Security Administration's guidelines.

There's not exactly a specific listing for gout, but there is one for inflammatory arthritis which gout can fall under.

If you meet the following requirements, you could be eligible for disability benefits:

- You have two or more bodily systems that are significantly affected by gout.
- You experience at least two of these symptoms: weight loss, chronic fever, malaise, fatigue.
- Your major peripheral joints in the upper body make it impossible to perform motor movements. This includes the hands, elbows, shoulders, and wrists.
- Your weight-bearing joints such as your hips, knees, and ankles are so impacted that you're not able to walk effectively.

If you feel like you got denied a job because of your condition, you can ask for an appeal. Although it's hard to tell with gout, your employer can't deny you a job especially if you are qualified and able to perform the tasks required in the job.

However, if you're after proving that you have gout and you want to get disability benefits, you will need to undergo the following tests to diagnose gout: blood test, x-ray, urinalysis, and scans. These tests are for verification purposes only and not for medical treatment.

In Conclusion

It’s not easy to live with gout, let alone, work while you have it.

Since it’s not easily identifiable to the human eye, your employer and colleagues might see it as you trying to get off work when really, you’re disabled due to the pain. It gets so bad that it impairs your ability to function normally especially when you’re at the stage where your symptoms are getting worse.

Aside from managing your symptoms, you should be taking these steps to help improve your working conditions.