Top 6 Tips for Controlling Gout

by SPIRO KOULOURIS

Gout Control Tips: Gout Lifestyle Changes

When a gout flare occurs, the symptoms can be very painful — leaving you unable to move for hours, sometimes even for days.

If you suffer from gout or have recently been diagnosed with this condition, there are several gout lifestyle changes you can implement to take control of it. These tips are meant to help minimize the incidence of flares as well as prevent other complications related to gout.

1. Maintain a Healthy Diet

Diet plays a huge role in managing your gout symptoms. We now have several medications used to prevent and treat gout, but a healthy diet will always be your first line of defense. Eating the right foods will help you function optimally and fight against the body mechanisms causing those gout flares.

A healthy diet consists of 80% clean carbohydrates, 10% fat and 10% protein. The reason gout patients need to limit fat and protein is that most of these food sources are high in purines. Purines turn into uric acid, which in turn can cause a gout attack.

2. Avoid Triggers

Speaking of purines, gout sufferers need to avoid trigger foods that are high in this compound. The biggest culprits behind gout attacks are alcoholic beverages (especially beer), sugary foods, red meat and shellfish. You don’t have to say goodbye to these foods forever. However, you need to limit your intake of them if you want to avoid increasing your uric acid levels.

There are also certain drugs known to elevate uric acid levels, so it’s best to avoid them. This includes diuretic drugs, low-dose aspirin and drugs that suppress the immune system.

3. Take Your Medication

After getting diagnosed with gout, your doctor will prescribe you medicine(s) to prevent and treat your gout. These drugs are meant to control uric acid production in the body and assist in the excretion of uric acid.

The most commonly prescribed drug is allopurinol. There’s also Febuxostat, Sulfinpyrazone, Benzbromarone, Probenecid and Pegloticase. Take note that these drugs are meant to manage uric acid, not treat gout pain. A medicine used to treat pain during a gout attack is called colchicine. This can be taken in combination with NSAIDs. Always follow your doctor's recommendations for pain relief.

4. Exercise Regularly

Exercise is a great way to get your joints moving and helps you maintain a healthy body weight. Being overweight or obese puts you at a higher risk for experiencing other gout comorbidities such as diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, bone loss and tophi. Aim to exercise four to five times a week. Make sure your exercise consists of a combination of the following:

- Range of motion exercises.
- Strength exercises.
- Cardiovascular exercises.
- Stretching exercises.

Try to avoid intense workouts that put you at high risk for injury. You don't want to twist or stress your joints too much.

5. Take Gout-Friendly Supplements and Eat Gout-Friendly Foods

Some certain foods and supplements may help with gout. One of them is vitamin C; cherries are the number one gout-friendly food and are high in vitamin C. Other sources of vitamin C include oranges, lemons, strawberries, kiwis, plums and lychees.

Bromelain is another compound known to help control gout. It can only be found in the head of a pineapple, so you may want to take it in pill form instead. There are bromelain supplements in the market that you can buy and use in case of a gout attack.

6. Drink Lots of Water

Keep yourself hydrated throughout the day to help dilute the uric acid in your blood. Sure, you'll be taking trips to the bathroom more often, but you'll also be eliminating uric acid from your body in the process.

Managing Pain During a Gout Attack

If you're already experiencing a gout flare, here are steps you can take to help minimize the pain.

1. Take Your Medicine Right Away

Before you even have a gout attack, you should already have a medicine like colchicine in your cabinet. This way, you can take it right away as soon as you experience a flare. If you're unprepared, you may need to call your doctor to get a prescription.

2. Limit Your Movement

A gout attack can be very painful, and the best thing you can do at this time is stay on bed rest until the pain subsides. Raising the affected joint will also help lessen the swelling. You'll be limited in movement, so having someone to help you get things done would be ideal.

3. Ice It Down

Apply a cold pack to the affected joint to reduce pain and inflammation. You can do this when the pain has already lessened, as a fresh gout flare can be painful even with the slightest touch.

4. Do an Epsom Salt Soak

Epsom salt is known to possess healing properties that may relieve pain and swelling. During a gout attack, soak

the affected area in water mixed with Epsom salt. You can also do a full-body soak in a tub. Do the soak for at least 20 minutes before rinsing.

5. Do an Apple Cider Vinegar Soak

Apple cider vinegar is a wonderful home remedy known to treat many conditions including gout. This time, you can do another type of soak using ACV. Simply soak the affected joint in water mixed with ACV or use an ACV-soaked towel and wrap it around the affected area. You can learn more about home remedies for gout here.

6. Drink Baking Soda

Like apple cider vinegar, baking soda has alkalizing properties that may help provide relief from a gout attack. Mix half a teaspoon of baking soda in a glass of water and drink. Do this three times a day to lower uric acid in your body.

In Summary

This list of gout lifestyle changes may seem exhaustive, but it’s good to have plenty of remedies you can do. You can begin by slowly adopting one of the healthy habits mentioned above. Once you make these changes a permanent part of your daily routine, you should be safe from gout attacks.