Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms of Juvenile Gout

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Gout in Children

While gout is generally a condition associated with adults and the elderly, children can also develop gout characterized by reddened, inflamed and painful joints.Unfortunately, children who suffer with this condition can experience similar pain and discomfort as adults.

In fact, those youngsters afflicted with gout can experience such severe pain that any type of movement is difficult. They often waken during the night, screaming in pain. However, there are many things that parents can do to alleviate their children's pain and prevent gout attacks from coming back.

Juvenile Gout Signs and Symptoms:

While the overall numbers of reported cases are quite rare, young children can develop gout within any joints including the fingers and/or ankles. The majority of the time, signs and symptoms of gout occur in the feet.

Common signs and symptoms of childhood and teenage gout include joints that become:

- Hot to the touch
- Tender
- Swollen
- Painful
- Very difficult to move

Typically, a juvenile gout attack will improve after a couple of days but sometimes it can take a week or more for symptoms to disappear completely. Frequently, gout returns with children and teens facing the same painful symptoms weeks, months or even years later.

Note: It is very important for juvenile gout patients to be extremely careful when participating in any type of sports or physical activity.

Juvenile Gout Causes:

Causes of juvenile gout include the following:

1. **Genetic Conditions:** More common in boys but occasionally occurring in girls, these conditions cause an over-production of uric acid (e.g. Lesch-Nyhan syndrome and PRPP synthetase overactivity). While these particular disorders are uncommon, there are simple tests to detect them.

- **Diseases of the Kidneys**: Some kidney diseases result in a child's body having a reduced ability to get rid of uric acid. There are several types including:

1. Inherited gene mutations that produce a protein known as uromodulin. With this condition, juvenile patients develop gout during their teens accompanied by gradually worsening kidney failure.
2. Another inherited gene mutation that produces a protein referred to as renin. A child or teen with this condition has fairly low blood pressure, slightly elevated blood potassium and anemia along with mild kidney disease. Their anemia tends to develop when they are young and the cause is unknown. This kidney condition is easily treated with medications.

- **Metabolic Syndrome:** Symptoms of this syndrome include being either overweight or obese as well as having high blood pressure. Typically, this condition develops during a young person's 20s or 30s. However, it is becoming increasingly prevalent in younger patients.

Juvenile Gout Treatments:

If juvenile gout is suspected, a doctor will start by testing the child's serum uric acid levels. Treatment options to prevent future flare-ups of gout in children and teenagers include:

- Reduction in the consumption of red meats
- Avoidance of high-fat foods
- Gradual weight loss
- Prescription medications to reduce related pain and/or inflammation

Some Final Thoughts:

While a parent may not be able to keep their child from getting gout, they can find ways to reduce the condition's impact on their child's life. If juvenile gout is left untreated, it can ultimately lead to serious kidney disease.

The majority of people consider gout to be the result of excessive intake of beer, alcohol, shellfish and/or red meats. Generally, these factors are not what lead to juvenile gout. While consuming the aforementioned foods and drinks can lead to a gout flare-up in adults, there are generally other reasons why it comes on.

If a young child or teen get gout, it is crucial that appropriate urine and blood tests are done to ascertain the cause as there is often an underlying problem that is likely easy to treat.