Optimizing a Gout Appointment With a Family Doctor or Rheumatologist

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Preparing for Gout Appointments

If you are experiencing the common signs and symptoms of gout, you should make an appointment with your family physician.

Typically, the signs and symptoms of gout occur very suddenly, often coming on in the middle of the night, without any prior warning. They can include the following:

- **Intense pain in the large joints:** This includes the joints of the big toes. However the pain can also occur anywhere in the feet, ankles, hands, wrists and/or knees.
- **Discomfort that lingers:** Joint pain and discomfort can persist for up to a couple of weeks, once the most severe pain has subsided.
- **Redness and inflammation:** Affected joint(s) generally become red, swollen and/or tender.

After you have had an initial examination with your family doctor, he or she may refer you to a rheumatologist, a medical doctor who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of inflammatory joint conditions such as arthritis and gout.

What you can do to help prepare for your specialist appointment:

- **Jot down any symptoms you've experienced (e.g.** when they began, how often you get them, etc.).
- **Make special note of any** other medical conditions, family history of gout,recent changes and major stressors in your life.
- **Make a list of** any medications, vitamins and supplements you are on.
- If possible, **take a family member or friend along to help remember detailed medical information.**
- **Make a list of** any questions you have for the doctor. This can optimize the time you spend with the busy specialist.
- Am I actually suffering from gout or could it be something else?
- What types of treatment(s) are most likely to alleviate my gout symptoms?
- Are there any potential side effects with the medications you are prescribing for my gout symptoms?
- If these gout medications do not work and/or cause bothersome side effects, what other options are available?
- How soon should my symptoms start to subside after starting the treatment(s)?
- Will I have to take gout medications on a long term basis?
- How can I best manage my other health conditions along with gout?
- Do I need to make any adjustments to my present diet?
- Is it ok to drink alcoholic beverages? If so, what is the weekly limit?
- Can you recommend any pertinent brochures and medical websites to help me become more educated

about gout?

Questions to ask your rheumatologist:

Do not hesitate to veer away from your scripted questions if you think of any other concerns during the course of your appointment.

What you can expect from the specialist:

Your specialist will likely ask several questions. Be ready to answer them as accurately and truthfully as possible. These could include:

- Being as specific as possible, what type of gout symptoms do you experience? In what part(s) of your body?
- When did these symptoms first develop? Do they come and go? With what frequency?
- Is there anything in particular that appears to trigger your symptoms (e.g. various foods, alcohol and/or physical/emotional stresses?
- What does your diet consist of over the course of a typical day?
- Do you consume alcohol? If yes, how often and how much?
- Are you currently being treated for other medical condition(s)?
- Including OTC, prescription drugs, vitamins and/or supplements, what kind of medications are you taking at the present time?
- Does any first-degree relative (i.e. parents, brothers and/or sisters) have a history of gout?
- Do you have any other concerns that you would like to discuss?