The Benefits of Seeing a Gout Specialist

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What Is a Gout Specialist?

Having gout means you will be visiting the doctor every now and then, whether it is to receive urate-lowering therapy or to treat a gout attack. Whatever the case may be, it is important that you seek a medical professional, or a gout specialist, who can give you the appropriate treatment for your situation.

A Doctor vs Specialist

In the beginning, you may just see a primary care physician or an MD. They are often the first to hear about your symptoms and will have you undergo tests to see whether you have gout. If you do get diagnosed with gout, they may also prescribe you with the proper medication to help manage it.

However, gout is a complex condition that requires someone who is more specialized with diseases of this nature. Since it is considered a form or arthritis, you will need to see a rheumatologist who can look deeper into it. They are experts on conditions like gout and will be able to provide you with a more potent solution.

The unfortunate thing is that most gout patients will never see a rheumatologist or a gout specialist in their lifetime. They often just rely on their primary care physician for treatment. Only when they have exhausted all their treatment options will they be referred to a rheumatologist.

What Does a Rheumatologist Do?

Rheumatologists will bring you in the right direction for treating your gout. They educate you about the disease and discuss not just what medication to take but also the lifestyle changes you need to make to prevent gout attacks.

First Thing’s First - Evaluate

First, they will look at how frequent and severe your flares are and then check on you regularly to see whether the treatments and changes prescribed have made any difference to lessening your symptoms.

They will not just give you general advice on what to do but will have you a more tailored solution. Gradual is key here too. Making too many changes in a short amount of time can be risky and doing this makes it hard to determine what treatment worked and what did not.

Routine Appointments

It’s going to take more than just one session with a rheumatologist to get proper treatment for your gout. You’ll need to see them a couple of times for a few months to determine what treatment plan is for you. They might even refer you to other specialists who can better address an issue, say a dietitian for your food intake or a

podiatrist for surgery.

Take note that rheumatologists do more than just deal with gout. They are knowledgeable in other arthritic and rheumatologic diseases like back and neck pain, bursitis, tendinitis, nerve impingements, musculoskeletal pain disorders, lupus, fibromyalgia and much more. Anything that involves pain and disorder in the muscles, joints, tendons, bones and connective tissues are covered by a rheumatologist.

Other Gout Specialists

Dietitian

Part of managing gout symptoms is following a low-purine diet. When you consume too many purines, it can cause a uric acid buildup in your body, which leads to a painful gout attack. Modifying your diet is a step in the right direction but it is often not enough since not all of us are knowledgeable with the contents of the food that we eat. For this, you will need to work with a dietitian who can create a tailored diet plan for you. They can provide you with meal ideas that help reduce your symptoms while still meeting your daily dietary requirements.

Cardiologist

Having gout means you are at high risk for heart disease or a heart attack. You want to keep your heart health in check by meeting with a cardiologist. They will check your heart condition and see if you have high blood pressure. They will also give you advice on how to limit your risk for heart damage.

Orthopedist

Gout does not require surgery. However, if it becomes too severe and progresses into tophi, you may be required to undergo one. This is because the uric acid crystals have already turned in to chalky nodules that cause pain and impair your movement. It can be difficult to function normally when you have tophi. An orthopedist is a surgeon that specializes in this area and they will remove the tophi from the affected joint.

Podiatrist

Since gout often affects the toes, patients may also need to see a specialist who specializes in this area of the body. A podiatrist is a medical specialist who helps with conditions that affect the feet and lower legs. Just like orthopedists, they too can perform surgery in this area of the body. So, if your condition has progressed into tophi, it may be worth seeing a podiatrist.

However, if you only have gout, you do not want to limit your visits to just a podiatrist since most of them do not have the ability to prescribe you the gout medication. They might be able to, but your options could be limited. Your best bet will always be a rheumatologist since this is an area that they highly specialize in. They can get to the root cause of the problem and give you the appropriate treatment.

Who Should I Call During an Emergency?

In case of a sudden gout attack, you can call your general practitioner. There is no need for a specialist in this situation since what you are dealing with is pain that needs to go away immediately. They'll prescribe you over-the-counter, non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory drugs which can help relieve the pain. Although ideally, you should already have this in your medicine cabinet.

For severe cases where you do not respond to any home remedies or drugs prescribed to you, you may be injected with corticosteroid injections to the inflamed joint. This is very useful especially if you are sensitive to certain medications.

In Conclusion

Gout is a lifelong condition and it is not going to get treated with just a one-size-fits-all solution. Every person is different and the treatment plan that worked for one patient may not necessarily work for you. As a gout sufferer, you have to be proactive with treating your symptoms and work with several specialists, as well as do your own research to find a regimen that works for your situation.