Is It Gout or Rheumatoid Arthritis?

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Gout vs. Rheumatoid Arthritis

The terms gouty arthritis and rheumatoid arthritis (RA) are often used interchangeably. After all, both types of arthritis cause painful swelling of the joints and can stiffen them, making natural movement difficult. Despite some similarities in symptoms when it comes to gout vs. rheumatoid arthritis, rheumatologists can typically the two illnesses apart. In reality, the causes and treatments for each condition are entirely different.

Treatment for these types of disorders should begin as soon as possible to reduce the likelihood of flare-ups. Not only that, but both illnesses are progressive, meaning that if they are not treated appropriately, they will worsen with time. In the long run, both conditions have the potential to cause irreversible damage.

Let's take a deeper look at the symptoms of gouty arthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Even better, we will discuss healthy habits and foods to help reduce gout and RA symptoms.

What Are the Causes of RA and Gout?

Gouty Arthritis Causes

Gout is a severe form of arthritis that usually affects the foot's big toe joint. It can be induced indirectly by consuming high-purine foods and beverages.

Gouty arthritis is thought to be caused by purines. These chemical substances are found not just in our bodies, but also in the foods we eat. Most meats (particularly organ meats), most fish, shellfish and even some vegetables are high in purine. Purines can also be found in whole grain breads and cereals.

Purines are converted to uric acid in the body. Gout can develop when the blood contains too much uric acid. Uric acid is generally excreted in the urine, but high levels can cause inflammation and pain in the joints by forming sharp crystals.

Because the intense bursts of pain can be so striking, cases of gout flare-ups tend to be easier to identify. Gout attacks are typically described as feeling like a hot poker in the joint.

Rheumatoid Arthritis Causes

RA is an autoimmune illness in which the body's own immune system attacks the joints and causes inflammation, stiffness, discomfort and swelling in the joints. According to a recent report published by the American College of Rheumatology, around 1.3 million Americans suffer from RA.

The cause of RA is still unknown to the medical community. Scientists believe that the illness is triggered by something in the environment, such as a virus, and that part of it has to do with a person's genetic makeup.

Symptoms of Gout vs. RA

Rheumatoid arthritis can affect anyone, although it most commonly affects women throughout their reproductive years. Gout typically manifests itself in one of two stages of life: late 20s and early 30s, or the 70s and 80s.

Common Gout Symptoms:

- **Migrating pain:** The big toe is the most frequent occurrence of gout, although it can also affect the ankles, knees, elbows, wrists and fingers. Because the affected areas tend to shift from flare to flare, they are said to be rarely symmetrical.
- **Fever:** Gout flare-ups can produce severe inflammation, which can result in a fever and other flu-like symptoms, like exhaustion and an overall sense of being sick.
- **Tophi:** Chronic gout patients may develop tiny, hard lumps in their affected joints over time. If they form in the kidneys, they can also cause kidney stones.

Common RA Symptoms:

- **Symmetrical symptoms:** Joint discomfort is common with RA, and it commonly affects both sides of the body. Symptoms usually start in the tiny joints of the hands and feet, but discomfort can spread to the wrists, knees, ankles, elbows, hips and shoulders as the condition advances.
- **Morning stiffness:** The discomfort of RA is usually at its worst first thing in the morning, resulting in stiffness that can last an hour or more. Fortunately, movement aids in the relief of RA symptoms. As a result, as people increase their physical activity, they often feel better later in the day.

What is the Treatment for Each Condition?

Treating Rheumatoid Arthritis

Although RA cannot be cured, it can be managed by regulating joint inflammation, alleviating symptoms and lowering joint damage. Your doctor will collaborate with you to develop a treatment plan that is tailored to your specific needs.

Disease-modifying antirheumatic medications (DMARDs) or strong biologics are frequently used to treat active and severe RA.

Treating Gout

Medication and lifestyle changes may be used to treat gout.

Medication
Your doctor will prescribe gout medications based on your overall health and preferences. The primary goal is to treat and prevent the severe pain associated with a flare-up.

Medication options include:

- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).
- Colchicine.
- Corticosteroids.

Lifestyle Changes
Some lifestyle changes can help with gout relief. These are some examples:

- Staying away from alcoholic beverages.
- Keeping hydrated.
- Limiting purine-rich foods, such as red meat, organ meats and seafood.

- Maintaining a healthy weight and doing exercise on a regular basis.

5 Best Foods for Gout

Reducing your purine intake is one of the things that may help you manage your gout. You should choose low-purine foods such as:

1. **Beans:** Beans, which are high in fiber, should be included in a gout diet. One cup of cooked beans contains roughly 12 grams of fiber, whereas meat has none. The purine component of beans does not increase gout symptoms.
2. **Food rich in carbohydrates:** Carbohydrates are pure energy and processing them is easier on your kidneys than processing meats. Fruits, vegetables, whole grain, whole wheat pasta and rice should account for 80% of your daily calories.
3. **Veggies:** A diet rich in veggies can help you reach and maintain a healthy weight while also providing your body with essential vitamins and minerals.
4. **Low-fat dairy:** The proteins in dairy products have been found in studies to help lower uric acid levels.
5. **Optimize your protein intake:** Meat, poultry, fish and nuts should account for no more than 10% of your daily protein calories.

The Bottom Line

Consult your doctor if your gout or RA treatment is not working, especially if your discomfort began in your big toe. Your doctor will collaborate with you to find a treatment that will provide you with relief.