Herbal and Natural Remedies for Gout

by BRENDA VANTA

Herbal Remedies for Gout

Cranberry

Drinking eight to sixteen ounces of cranberry juice daily could prevent an attack of gout. Cranberries have similar effects to aspirin (anti-inflammatory, painkiller, decrease swelling) as it helps increase the amount of salicylic acid in the body. A 2005 study published in the *Journal of Urology* reveals that uric acid can be decreased in both blood and urine after drinking cranberry juice. Choose natural, unsweetened juices, rather than cranberry extracts. High doses of cranberry extract can cause kidney stones and interfere with blood thinning medication.

Green Tea

Green tea supplement is prepared from the leaves of Camellia sinesis. It helps boost the immune system, and is a strong anti-oxidant. The caffeine found in green tea and coffee has protective benefits and can help prevent a gout attack, according to some studies. A few studies indicate that green tea extract can help reduce the level uric acid in the body. It is safe to drink a few cups of green tea daily, but be aware that high doses of green tea extract can interact with number of prescription drugs including medication used for heart diseases (beta blockers), some anti-depressants (i.e. MAO inhibitors), certain antibiotics (i.e. lactams and quinolones) and chemo-drugs like doxorubicin and tamoxifen.

Chinese Herbs

Over one hundred herbs used in Chinese medicine had been evaluated for gout, in a 2000 study featured in the *Journal of Ethno Pharmacology*. Researchers looked specifically at those herbs that inhibit the activity of xanthine oxidase. The enzyme xanthine oxidase catalyzes the oxidation (break down) of hypoxanthine to xanthine and then uric acid, which plays an essential role in gout. The most active herbs were Cinnamomum cassia, Chrysanthenum indicum, Lycopus europaeus and Polygonum cuspidatum. Green tea also influences this enzyme. Most herbal supplements prescribed by practitioners of Chinese medicine include several herbs. Although some of them had not been found to interact with drugs (i.e. Chrysanthemum indium), others may interfere with medication (i.e. Cinnamonum cassia decreases the blood sugar. You may need lower doses of anti-diabetes drugs; the same herb used in high doses may interact with drugs that can harm the liver. Ask your doctor about the herbs you're considering, and learn how it may influence the medication you are currently taking.

Considerations

Overall, herbal remedies for gout have a solid safety profile and can help strengthen your health, including the joints affected by gout. Herbs can be used as dry extracts in powders, capsule forms or teas, as glycerin extract, or alcohol based preparations (tinctures). If you choose to drink tea, make it with one teaspoon of herb per one cup of water. Steep covered for five minutes (if the medicine if made from leafs or flowers), or ten minutes (if the medicine is made for roots). The usual dosage is two to four cups of tea daily, unless advised otherwise by your

healthcare professional.