Your Guide to a Gout-Specific Diet

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Gout Diet Plan

One of the best ways to manage gout is by following a proper gout diet plan. The great thing about a gout-specific diet is that it's similar to most healthy diet plans out there. So, you don't necessarily have to make drastic changes to your lifestyle. You just need to tweak certain parts of your diet, and you can continue living a healthy life without having to worry about your gout symptoms resurfacing.

What does the gout diet plan look like? Simple. Just follow the 80-10-10 rule. 80% of your calories should come from clean carbohydrates, 10% should be fat and 10% should be protein.

80% Clean Carbs

Clean carbs can come from fruits, vegetables and 100% whole (unrefined) grains. These are important because they provide your body with energy and are full of vitamins and nutrients that nourish your body. They also keep things going in your bowl, putting less strain on your kidneys. Unlike meat, clean carbs are much easier on your body and don't take as long to digest.

10% Fat

Fat is another kind of fuel for your body and keeps you feeling full for longer. With the gout diet plan, you should aim to eat only from healthy fat sources like butter, cheese, full-fat yogurt, eggs, avocados, fatty fish, nuts and seeds. Extra virgin olive oil is also a good source of healthy fat that I try to have every day.

Try to limit saturated fat found in the fatty parts of meat, because this can limit your ability to eliminate uric acid. Trans-fat should absolutely be avoided since it increases the inflammation in your body. You may find trans-fat in fried foods, baked goods and processed snacks.

10% Protein

Protein is your body's building block for growth and muscle. When we hear protein, the first thing that comes to mind is meat. However, there are just as many proteins found in plant foods like grains, beans, vegetables and nuts. If you must eat meat, go for gout-approved meat, like fish and poultry. Red meat like beef and veal should be limited since they can be high in purines.

Foods to Avoid with Gout

Some foods should absolutely be avoided in the gout diet plan. They are known to cause gout flares due to their high-purine content and must be eliminated from your diet:

- Alcoholic beverages, especially beer
- Certain types of seafood like anchovies, sardines, mackerel, scallops, mussels, shrimp, lobster and crab
- Certain meats like liver, bacon, cold cuts, venison, beef kidney, brain and sweetbreads

Foods to Limit

These are foods that contain a moderate amount of purine and should be eaten sparingly:

- Fish, being high in protein, should be limited to 10% of your daily calories
- Certain meats like beef, poultry, turkey, pork and lamb

A Note on High-purine Veggies and Beans...

Certain plant-based foods like spinach, mushrooms, green peas, asparagus, cauliflower, kidney beans, lentils and lima beans are known to be high in purines, but studies show they don't increase your risk for gout. This could be because the effects of the purines are neutralized by the vitamins and minerals that these foods posses and don't strain the kidneys, unlike meat.

Gout Diet Best Practices

Aside from following the 80-10-10 diet plan we outlined above, there are certain food habits you should incorporate in your daily routine.

1. Drink Plenty of Water

Water dilutes uric acid in your body, preventing it from building up in your joints and helping your kidneys to eliminate it more efficiently. A glass of water before a meal also prevents you from overeating. Aim to drink eight to ten glasses of water per day.

2. Opt for Organic

When shopping for food items, choose organic as much as possible. Organic foods can have higher nutritional value and lower your risk of exposure to toxic pesticides. Shopping organic is also good for the environment. You can find reasonably priced organic produce in your local farmer's market as opposed to the supermarket.

3. Watch Your Sugar

Sugar is in many foods items and can be difficult to avoid. Be vigilant as it could be hiding in foods you least expect it to be, such as pasta sauces, salad dressing, cereals, yogurt, granola bars, tea and energy drinks. You want to limit your sugar intake — especially the artificial kind — since they are also high in purines, which can set off a painful gout flare.

4. Read the Label

Food advertisements can trick you into thinking something is healthy when it's really not. For example, a diet soda may claim to have "zero sugar", when in reality, it still contains artificial sweeteners such as aspartame and acesulfame, which can have detrimental effects on the body.

Don't fall for the catchphrase on the front of a package and always read the label on the back. This will tell you what's really in your food. And when in doubt about certain ingredients, do your research.

5. Eat Gout-Friendly Foods

Gout-friendly foods are not just healthy, they also help prevent symptoms from showing up. They have superior qualities that help equip your body with the right nutrients to fight gout. This includes cherries, oranges,

strawberries, bell peppers, pineapple and omega-3 rich fish.

In Conclusion

If you already have a healthy diet, you won't have a hard time adjusting to the gout diet plan. However, if you are like most Americans and you are used to a diet that's full of fat and sugar, you may have a hard time switching.

The key to succeeding is by doing the transition slowly. Start with small steps and strive to maintain them as you progress. For example, in the first month, you can make it a goal to limit drinking alcohol to only two times a week. Then, move towards eliminating other items like processed food and replacing them with whole foods.

When you're overdoing it on certain food items, you'll know because gout symptoms will naturally show up leaving you immobile and in pain for days. Of course, you don't want to wait that long before it happens. Until then, the best thing you can do is follow the gout diet plan.