Precautions to Take With Gout and Alcohol

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Gout and Alcohol

If you suffer from gout, you probably should stay away from alcohol. It causes uric acid levels to rise, which can trigger a gout attack.

Gout is a debilitating form of arthritis affecting mainly the big toe and sometimes the feet, ankles, knees, hands and wrists. It's a result of uric acid buildup that forms within specific joints and soft tissues.

Men are mostly affected by this condition, and symptoms can include pain, redness and swelling that can last for 24 hours to a few days. Though symptoms disappear gradually, it can come back again months or years later.

The Link Between Gout and Alcohol

The link between gout and alcohol has long been assumed with doctors advising their gout patients to stay away from the beverage. Drinking alcohol regularly can cause some serious repercussions to gout sufferers, especially those who drink beer.

Due to indulgent lifestyles becoming more common, the number of gout cases over the years have increased too.

1. Beer

If beer is your alcohol of choice, consider lowering your intake as soon as possible.

It's been strongly associated with gout attacks, as not only does it contain alcohol but it also has the highest level of purines compared to any other alcoholic beverage. It's also high in brewer's yeast which is known to worsen gout pain.

In one study, they found that patients who consumed a 12-ounce serving of beer per day were almost two times more likely to have gout compared to those who don't drink alcohol.

Another extensive study found that two to four beers a week increased one's chances of developing gout by 25%. The more beer they drank, the more likely they were to suffer from a gout attack. Too much alcohol increases uric acid production and makes it difficult for the body to get rid of.

2. Hard Liquors

Hard liquors have the same effect, though not as severe. Spirits like vodka and whiskey raise the risk for a gout attack but only half as much as beer.

One liquor drink can increase one's risk for a gout attack, but two or more increase the risk by a whopping 60%.

Wine drinkers are not safe either. When the three types of alcohol (beer, wine and liquor) were compared, it was found that wine had a significant effect on gout. Those who drank one to two glasses of wine 24 hours before a gout attack raised their risk for future attacks by 138%. Wine doubled their risk compared to those who did not drink wine.

These results apply to men since most of the participants in the study were men. The effects of alcohol for women with gout are unclear, but the pattern of its effects on risk of gout attacks was generally similar to men's.

What is the Best Thing to Drink if You Have Gout?

With this in mind, you should try to cut out beer and stick to wine since it still does provide some health benefit if consumed in moderation.

Studies have shown that people who drink less than two cups of wine per day get some protective effect though, it is not statistically significant. This is because people who only drink wine tend to have healthier lifestyles compared to those who drink just beer. They eat healthily, exercise regularly and smoke less compared to beer and liquor drinkers.

As for beer, you should know that most of the stuff you buy from the store probably contains harmful ingredients not reported on the label. This is because alcohol companies have lobbied the industry for years, giving them the ability to use unsafe ingredients in their formula without including them in the label.

For example, Newcastle beer contains coloring made from ammonia which is cancer-causing. Then there's Corona beer which contains genetically modified organism (GMO) corn syrup. It's an evil substance similar to high fructose corn syrup which is metabolically risky. The fructose is absorbed immediately and goes directly to your liver. Any gout sufferer who has done their research knows that liver and digestive health are important factors in managing gout symptoms.

Other beers like Michelob Ultra beer, Budweiser, Guinness, Coors Lite and Miller Lite are also said to contain ingredients harmful to gout sufferers. Ingredients like GMO corn, GMO dextrose and corn syrup and high-fructose corn syrup can be found in these beers which are not suitable for your gout.

If you can, try to stay away from American beers since they are filled with GMO. Instead, go for organic beers. They're brewed locally using organic ingredients and will not be as unhealthy.

How Much Alcohol Can People With Gout Drink?

Each gout patient is different, so it is hard to determine what the safe limit for alcohol is. It's best to monitor your alcohol consumption and limit yourself to amounts that work best for you.

Lifestyle is an important factor for living with gout along with diet, medical condition, family history, age and sex. If you find that beer is a common trigger for you, consider lowering your dose to minimize instances of gout attacks.

If taking alcohol out of your lifestyle is not an option, you should still lower it to avoid those crippling flare-ups. Thankfully, there are medications now that can help prevent and treat gout symptoms. Aside from maintaining a rigid diet low in purines, you should also be taking gout medications such as allopurinol.

Make sure to speak with your doctor about taking medications while drinking alcohol.

There is no hard evidence to prove that alcohol reduces the efficacy of allopurinol, but it is still best to get the proper dosage to help you achieve low enough uric acid levels. If you still cannot lower your uric acid levels, then you may need to make drastic lifestyle changes, such as cutting out alcohol altogether.

During a gout flare-up, you should avoid alcohol, as it could make it worse. Your gout is already experiencing a buildup of uric acid crystals. By drinking alcohol, you are only adding to the buildup and overworking your kidneys,

resulting in kidney stones and lumps under the skin.