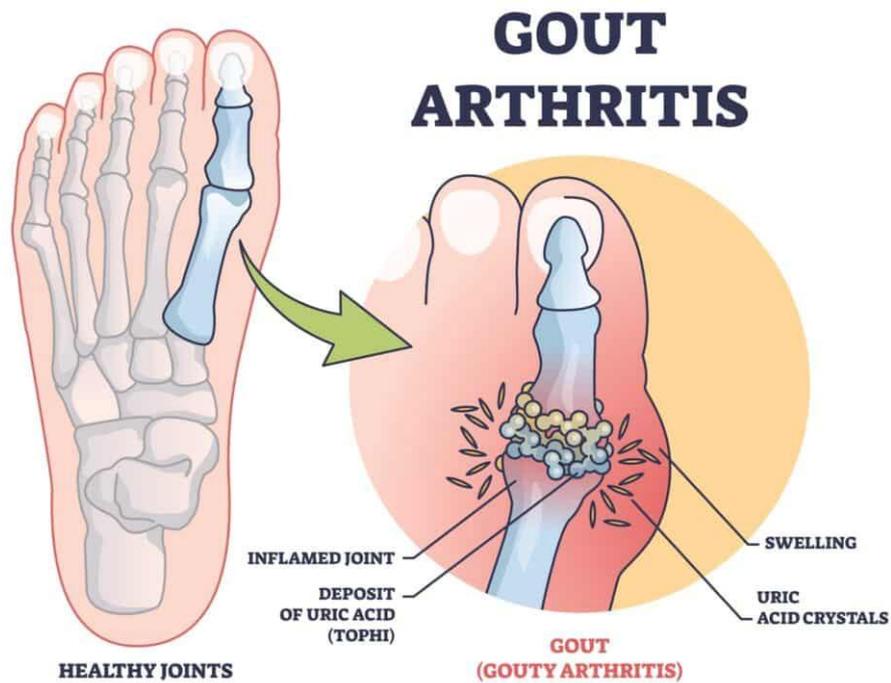


## Gout



### What is gout?

Gout is a type of **inflammatory arthritis** caused by a build-up of **uric acid crystals** in the joints. These crystals trigger sudden episodes of severe pain, swelling, redness, and warmth.

Gout often affects one joint at a time, most commonly the **big toe**, but it can also affect the ankle, knee, foot, wrist, elbow, or fingers.

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### What causes gout?

Gout develops when uric acid levels in the blood become too high. This can happen due to:

- The body producing too much uric acid
- The kidneys not removing enough uric acid

Factors that increase the risk include:

- Genetics or family history
  - Being overweight
  - Drinking alcohol (especially beer and spirits)
  - Diet high in purines (e.g. red meat, offal, some seafood)
  - Certain medications (e.g. diuretics)
  - Kidney disease
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### **Common symptoms**

Gout symptoms often start **suddenly**, usually at night. They may include:

- Severe joint pain
- Swelling and redness
- Warmth over the joint
- Extreme tenderness (even light touch can be painful)
- Reduced movement

An attack may last days to weeks if untreated.

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### **How is gout diagnosed?**

Gout is diagnosed using:

- Your symptoms and medical history
  - Blood tests to check uric acid levels
  - Joint fluid testing in some cases
  - Imaging if symptoms are unclear
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### **Treatment of gout attacks**

Acute gout attacks are treated to reduce pain and inflammation.

Treatment may include:

- Anti-inflammatory medication (NSAIDs)
- Colchicine
- Steroid tablets or injections
- Resting and elevating the affected joint

Early treatment helps shorten attacks.

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### **Long-term management**

If gout attacks are frequent, long-term treatment may be advised.

This may include:

- Medication to lower uric acid levels (e.g. allopurinol)
- Regular blood tests to monitor uric acid
- Ongoing review by your GP or specialist

Long-term treatment helps prevent future attacks and joint damage.

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### **Lifestyle and self-management**

You can help manage gout by:

- Drinking plenty of water
  - Reducing alcohol intake
  - Maintaining a healthy weight
  - Eating a balanced diet
  - Limiting foods high in purines
  - Staying physically active between attacks
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### **Exercise and activity**

- Avoid strenuous exercise during an acute attack
- Gradually return to activity once pain settles
- Low-impact exercise is encouraged between attacks



### When should I seek further help?

Contact your GP or healthcare professional if:

- You have frequent or severe gout attacks
- Symptoms are not improving with treatment
- New joints become affected
- You experience side effects from medication

### Outlook

With the right treatment and lifestyle changes, gout is **highly manageable**. Many people are able to prevent attacks and protect their joints long term.

If you have concerns or questions, speak to your GP or physiotherapist for further advice.