

Gout

Information & advice for self-care

Note: Please be aware that unless you have developed a wound, it is unlikely that you would benefit from being seen by a podiatrist for gouty joint, and so your referral may be declined. Please consult with your GP first.

What is gout?

Gout is a type of arthritis that affects men more than women and causes sudden severe joint pain. It usually starts in the big toe, but other joints can be affected such as the ankle, knee or foot.



What causes it?

Gout is caused by an imbalance of uric acid in the body, resulting in a build-up of uric acid in the blood. When there are high levels of uric acid in the blood, small urate crystals form which collect in and around the joint, causing irritation, inflammation and severe pain.

Is it serious?

Apart from the severe pain that gout causes, gout can also be responsible for kidney damage caused by crystals forming to create kidney stones, which are notorious for being extremely painful to pass.

Who gets it?

One in 200 people are affected by gout. It commonly affects men rather than women, especially as they get older, but can run in families too.

How do I know I have it?

The main symptom of gout is waking up in the middle of the night with an acute throbbing pain in the big toe, which is swollen, then doesn't return for a few months.

How do I prevent it?

You can reduce your chances of developing gout by leading a healthy lifestyle including:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Eating a healthy diet including what you drink (i.e. avoiding too much alcohol and fizzy drinks)
- Making sure there is plenty of Vitamin C in your diet

What are the treatments?

Gout can be controlled and regulated with anti-inflammatory drugs, which your GP will be able to prescribe, and these will alleviate the attack over 24 hours or so. An immediate measure to an acute attack is to levitate your leg to help reduce swelling and apply ice or cooling lotions while waiting for your medication to take effect.

Your local podiatrist will also be able to help alleviate issues if already under podiatry care, by adapting your existing footwear with orthoses or other appliances which fit easily into your shoes, and help redistribute pressure away from the affected parts.

Made-to-measure shoes can also be prescribed; your podiatrist will be able to advise you on the correct type of shoes to wear and where to obtain them. They can also provide protective shields for your toes or padding to relieve pressure and reduce friction. Any secondary problems like ulcers or corns can also be treated. They can also refer you to a specialist for more serious cases.

When should I see an NHS podiatrist?

If you have any foot health concerns and think this may potentially lead to a complication, please consider discussing a podiatry referral with your GP.

If your foot becomes red, hot or swollen with new pain, with or without a wound, please ask your GP to refer you to the Podiatry Service.

Compliments, concerns or complaints

PALS may be the best starting point if you have a question or concern. If you would like to find an NHS dentist, know where your nearest doctor is or talk through a problem you have had with a service, you can contact the PALS service.

Tel: 01502 445447

Email: ECCH.patientliaison@nhs.net

Or write to:

PALS, East Coast Community Healthcare,
Hamilton House, Battery Green Road,
Lowestoft, NR32 1DE

This content was produced by the College of Podiatry. Find out more:

<https://cop.org.uk/common-foot-problems>



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