



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Gout

Having gout can often be difficult, but understanding the condition and what you can do to control it can make a big difference in your quality of life. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Gouty Arthritis	Gout is a type of arthritis that occurs in people who have high uric acid levels. When too much uric acid is present in the blood, it precipitates and takes the form of small crystals. Monosodium urate crystals then collect in the joint space. These needle-shaped crystals cause inflammation within the affected joint, resulting in pain, redness, and swelling. The joint may even feel hot to the touch.
Pseudogout	A condition that can be confused with gout. It produces pain and inflammation like gout, but it is caused by calcium phosphate crystals in the synovial fluid, not uric acid crystals. The best way to differentiate between the two is by collecting a sample of joint fluid with a needle, a procedure called arthrocentesis, and looking at the crystals under a microscope.
Purine	Compounds naturally present in all foods. When foods rich in purine, like red meat and seafood, are broken down and metabolized, they release uric acid into the bloodstream. If too much uric acid is present, it can increase the risk of gout. This is the reason people with gout are advised to eat a diet low in purine.
Synovial Fluid	A thin membrane that surrounds a joint. It produces a thick fluid, known as the synovial fluid, that lubricates that joint. This fluid is essential to reduce friction within the joint so that it can move smoothly. In the case of gout, the synovial fluid is filled with uric acid crystals that impede that flow.
Tophus (Tophi)	A collection of crystalline uric acid that is deposited beneath the skin. Tophi are seen in more advanced cases of gout. They are most commonly found along the ear cartilage, fingers, elbows, and big toes.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your gout.

About Symptoms

- How can I tell the difference between gout and a skin infection?
- Can I get symptoms of gout even with a healthy diet?
- Can gout cause permanent damage to the joints?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- What role does genetics play in gout? Am I at risk of developing symptoms even without a family history?
- Do I need to abstain from red meat and alcohol completely to keep my gout in control?
- Do prescription medications for other conditions increase my risk for gout?

About Diagnosis

- Can gout be diagnosed by appearance alone or does it require formal laboratory testing?
- If testing is performed, will a doctor insert a needle into my joint to collect fluid for analysis?

About Treatment

- Can I manage my gout with diet alone or do I need prescription medication too?
- How do prescription medications work to treat gout and what are their side effects?
- Is it okay for me to take NSAIDs on a short-term basis to manage pain from a gout flare up?

About Living With Gout

- How often am I likely to have a gout flare?
- What is the most effective way to manage pain?
- What changes can I make to my lifestyle that will decrease my risk for gout flares?
- Is it true that eating cherries can decrease flare-ups of gout. What other dietary changes do you recommend?
