

THE HEALTH NUGGET



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BY RISÉ RAFFERTY

Pain in Your Shoes

Many men rejoice that their manhood prevents them from experiencing the excruciating pain of childbirth. However, there is an affliction whose suffering has been compared to birth pains and 90 percent of the sufferers are male. Such extreme agony is only worthwhile if the results are joyous, as the birth of new life. But in the case of gout, there is no redeeming outcome.

Claimed to be the most excruciating form of arthritis, gout typically lodges itself in the joints of the foot, but is definitely not limited to there. Elevated levels of uric acid in the blood over a substantial period of time form needle-like crystals that deposit in and around the joint, resulting in inflammation, extreme pain and eventual destruction. Lowered temperatures in these areas is said to be a factor in the crystallization.

Uric acid is a normal substance our body produces. Purines are processed into uric acid from the food we digest. In normal amounts uric acid is useful to the body. Excessive, unsafe levels can be the result of renal failure, inefficient elimination by kidneys, over-consumption of purine-rich foods, or less commonly, overproduction, along with a genetic susceptibility. When levels exceed a certain mark, uric acid can crystallize and lead to gout attacks.

Authorities seem to agree that reducing levels of uric acid in the system is an important step in preventing future attacks. Improving efficiency in elimination can be accomplished with being thoroughly hydrated. The kidneys typically like to recycle uric acid, but drinking plenty of water (8 to 12 cups) will

aid in diluting uric acid and facilitating its elimination in the urine. This also helps prevent the formation of kidney stones made from uric acid.

Whole body mud packs and sauna treatments have also been found to be a very effective way of eliminating uric acid. "Sweat elicited by sweat-producing measures always contains uric acid. Subjects submitted to a daily hot mud pack for a period of 2 weeks or more eliminated considerable amounts of uric acid through the skin."¹ Reducing levels of uric acid in the blood over a period of time enables the deposits of uric acid crystals around the joints to dissolve. Exercise is crucial. It encourages moderate sweating, enhances blood circulation to the extremities and end joints where gout typically lodges, and ensures weight control. Being overweight is a risk factor for gout.

A diet low in purines reduces the serum level of uric acid as well, unless these levels are caused by other health conditions and are then not as responsive to dietary changes. "Various purine-rich foods and high protein intake have long been thought to be risk factors for gout."²

Confusion arises between purine and protein. While they are different, most foods that contain protein also have purines. All sources of dietary protein supply some purines, but some sources provide far more purines than others.

Alcoholic beverages, especially beer, are rich in purines, but we are not sure if that is the only risk factor. When consumed with a diet that contains other purine rich foods, the rise in gout is signifi-

cantly increased.³ Drinking alcohol impairs the body's excretion of uric acid, increases body weight and blood triglycerides, all factors implicated in the development of gout.⁴

A 12-year study examined the relationship between supposed dietary risk factors and new cases of gout among 47,150 men who had no history of gout. In that time period 730 new cases of gout were developed. The conclusion at the end of the study was that "higher levels of meat and seafood consumption are associated with an increased risk of gout. . . . Moderate intake of purine-rich vegetables or protein is not associated with an increased risk of gout."⁵ No increased risk of gout was associated with a diet that included peas, beans, mushroom, cauliflower and spinach for example, "even though these foods are considered high in purines."⁶ While low in purines, eggs are said to cause the system to naturally produce uric acid.

Ultimately the best diet for gout is the same diet that is best for heart disease, cancer and other health issues. Consuming a diet that has an emphasis on whole foods provides fiber, vitamins C, A and other antioxidants. All have been found to expel surplus amounts of uric acid. Folic acid inhibits uric acid production. Pantothenic acid, a B vitamin, is necessary for the conversion of uric acid into the harmless compounds urea and ammonia. Many gout patients are said to be deficient in this B vitamin.

There may be other factors associated with the development of gout such as hypertension, deficient levels of uricase, an enzyme needed to neutralize uric acid, use of certain medications such as diuretics, and lead in the body.⁷

In the pursuit to discover ways of finding relief from gout, several natural options exist and have been found to be very helpful.

Cherries and other dark berries have been successfully used for gout. Eating cherries or drinking

100% black cherry juice daily is said to increase collagen integrity, decrease inflammation, diminish uric acid levels and prevent gout attacks. Omega-3 fatty acids as found in flax seeds and black walnuts reduce inflammation and pain.

Celery seed is said to flush away uric acid crystals and have anti-inflammatory properties. It is found in several herbal gout remedies. Drinking a tea made from celery seeds several times a day is recommended to neutralize uric acid. Fresh French green bean juice has also been said to be helpful in relieving suffering from severe and acute gout pain.

Other herbs are said to be highly beneficial for some, such as turmeric, dandelion leaf and devil's claw. Japanese researchers say chiso prevents the synthesis of uric acid.

One cannot imagine the pain that is experienced by another whether in childbirth or in gout unless you've been there. Our experiences of trial, temptation and pain give us an opportunity to understand the weaknesses of corporate humanity; to be given the comfort we can give to others, to receive the mercy we in turn extend, to learn how to get back on our feet again to show others the way, to receive hope so we can inspire.

Jesus, appealing to the potential for empathy in the hearts of the condemning mob, said, "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone." Then he had to remind them by writing in the sand aspects of their lives, hoping that the revelation of their own failures and pain would call forth sympathy rather than condemnation. We haven't walked in each other's shoes, but there is One who has. He knows our pain. His compassions fail not.

¹ Thrash, M.D.s, Calvin & Agatha, *Home Remedies*, p. 88.

² <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/abstract/350/11/1093>.

³ <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/350/11/1093/F1>.

⁴ <http://rheumatology.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/34/8/756>.

⁵ <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/abstract/350/11/1093>.

⁶ <http://arthritis.about.com/cs/gout/a/foodstoavoid.htm>.

⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gout>.

