

Gout Diet: Foods to Eat and Those to Avoid

Gout is a painful form of arthritis that happens when too much uric acid builds up and forms crystals in your joints. Your body makes uric acid after it breaks down a substance called purine, which is found in many foods.

One of the things that may help you manage your gout is to reduce the amount of purines you eat. Keep in mind that while what you eat can affect how much uric acid your body produces, the effects are small compared to medication.

No specific eating plan will completely prevent flare-ups, but a good gout diet will help you:

- Reach a healthy weight
- Set and stick to good eating habits
- Limit foods with purines
- Add foods that can help control uric acid levels

Foods to Avoid if You Have Gout

Skip foods and drinks that are high in purines to help lower your chances of an attack.

You should stay away from these types of food:

- Beer and grain liquors (like vodka and whiskey)
- Red meat, lamb, and pork
- Organ meats, such as liver, kidneys, and glandular meats like the thymus or pancreas (you may hear them called sweetbreads)
- Seafood, especially shellfish like shrimp, lobster, mussels, anchovies, and sardines
- High-fructose products like soda and some juices, cereal, ice cream, candy, and fast food

Best Foods for a Gout Diet

You'll want to go for low-purine options like:

- Low-fat and nondairy fat products, such as yogurt and skim milk
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Nuts, peanut butter, and grains
- Fat and oil
- Potatoes, rice, bread, and pasta
- Eggs (in moderation)
- Meats like fish, chicken, and red meat are fine in moderation (around 4 to 6 ounces per day).
- Vegetables: You may see veggies like spinach and asparagus on the high-purine list, but studies show they don't raise your risk of gout or gout attacks.

What Can You Drink if You Have Gout?

Foods aren't the only thing that can affect uric acid. What you drink matters, too.

Dos

It's a good idea to drink lots of fluids -- 8 to 16 cups a day. At least half of what you drink should be water. Vitamin C (think orange juice) also can help lower uric acid, but studies also show that the high fructose in OJ may boost uric acid levels, so drink it in moderation. Caffeinated coffee can cut uric acid, too, as long as you don't overdo it.

Don'ts

Stay away from sugary drinks like soda and fruit juice. You also may need to limit or avoid alcohol as well. Talk with your doctor to find out what's right for you.

While a healthy diet can help control how much uric acid is in your system, you may still need medicine to prevent future attacks. Talk with your doctor about all your treatment options.