

Gout

Is Holistic Management Effective?

by Madeleine Beckman

Historically, gout has been known as “the disease of kings.” It was believed to result from overindulgence in food and alcohol.

Today, gout affects more men than women and is a known form of both acute and chronic arthritis. This condition is characterized by excess uric acid levels in the blood that cause painful, swollen joints. Gout can be debilitating and, in severe cases, can lead to permanent joint damage.



You're not Henry VIII

King Henry VIII suffered from gout and probably would have rejected changes to his indulgent diet even if it helped relieve his painful, swollen joints. Recent findings, however, indicate that there are strong connections between improved lifestyle and reduced gout flare-ups. For instance, by limiting purine-rich foods (ie, red meat and shellfish), alcohol, and sugar-laden beverages, patients can reduce their uric-acid levels and help manage their gout. It doesn't stop there: losing weight, exercising each day,

and performing stress-reduction exercises will not stop gout from occurring, but they will help to avoid flares and limit the duration of attacks.

In place of red meat and other uric acid-producing foods and beverages, experts recommend that affected people follow a diet of whole grains, some dairy, vegetables, nuts, legumes, and fruits. Patients with gout who consumed cherries over 2 days in a recent study had a 35% lower risk of experiencing gout attacks than did those who did not eat the fruit. In addition, coffee consumption seems to lower blood levels of urate, a salt of uric acid. Thus, including cherries, cherry juice, or cherry extract in the diet and drinking moderate levels of coffee may help to lower urate levels and help patients to better manage their gout symptoms.

Role of Patient and Practitioner

It is vital for both the patient and practitioner to understand how gout can present, have the condition diagnosed correctly, and then work together to promote urate-lowering holistic strategies.



Patients should avoid:

- Certain varieties of fish (eg, sardines, anchovies, scallops)
- Certain varieties of meat (eg, venison, turkey, bacon, and organ meats like liver)
- Red meat
- Processed foods (eg, chips)
- Refined carbohydrates (eg, white bread)
- Fructose
- Alcohol (more than two drinks each day)
- Multitasking
- Stressful situations
- A sedentary lifestyle

Patients should consume:

- Omega-rich, cold-water fish (eg, tuna)
- Eggs (in moderation)
- Nuts
- Vegetables (non-starchy)
- Whole grains
- Legumes (in moderation)
- Cherries, tart cherry juice, or cherry extract
- Coffee (in moderation)

Patients should be encouraged to:

- Lose weight.
- Exercise and practice stress-reducing activities like meditation.
- Maintain good hydration.
- Apply ice, not heat, to joints affected by gout.

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