



Suffering from gout? Pay attention to diet

My 86-year-old father-in-law is visiting. He's in good health, but has periodic problems with gout. Are there certain foods he should avoid to prevent a recurrence?

Gout is a type of arthritis that is caused by excess uric acid in the body, which causes crystals to form and accumulate around a joint. The body reacts by attacking the crystals with substances that cause inflammation, making the joint tender and painful.

The uric acid buildup itself is caused by the breakdown of compounds called purines. Purines are found naturally in the body — there's not much you can do about those — but they're also in certain foods.

Although questions remain on whether changing your diet can prevent a gout attack, research in recent years has revealed a few guidelines that may be helpful for people like your father-in-law who have suffered a gout attack. They include:

- Purines are found in many types of foods, but a large study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2004 linked gout only to high intake of meat and seafood, but not to vegetables and grains that are also high in purines (including peas, beans, lentils, spinach, mushrooms, oatmeal and cauliflower). Organ meats, such as liver, are particularly high in purines. Limiting meat and seafood intake to 4

to 6 ounces a day (two 2- to 3-ounce servings) could be helpful.

- Although gout can't be totally prevented, some foods seem to have a protective effect. The 2004 study showed that higher consumption of low- or non-fat dairy products was associated with a lower incidence of gout. More recently, a 2009 study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* showed that higher consumption of vitamin C supplements also appeared to be protective. The study involved only men and indicated that each 500-milligram increase in daily vitamin C consumption (up to 1,500 milligrams a day) was associated with a 17-percent reduction in risk. The upper limit for vitamin C consumption per day is 2,000 milligrams, including any vitamin C from food, so anyone interested in trying this should talk with their health care provider first.

- Alcohol, particularly beer, can interfere with the body's ability to eliminate purines from the body, so it should be limited. Enjoying a glass or two of wine a day appears to be OK, but it would be wise to refrain from any alcohol consumption during a gout attack.

The Mayo Clinic offers more detailed information on its website. See its information on a Gout Diet at <http://tinyurl.com/mayogout>.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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By Martha Filipic

614-292-9833

filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Julie Kennel, nutrition program manager for Ohio State University Extension in the Department of Human Nutrition in the College of Education and Human Ecology.

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2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
614-292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
330-263-3780

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