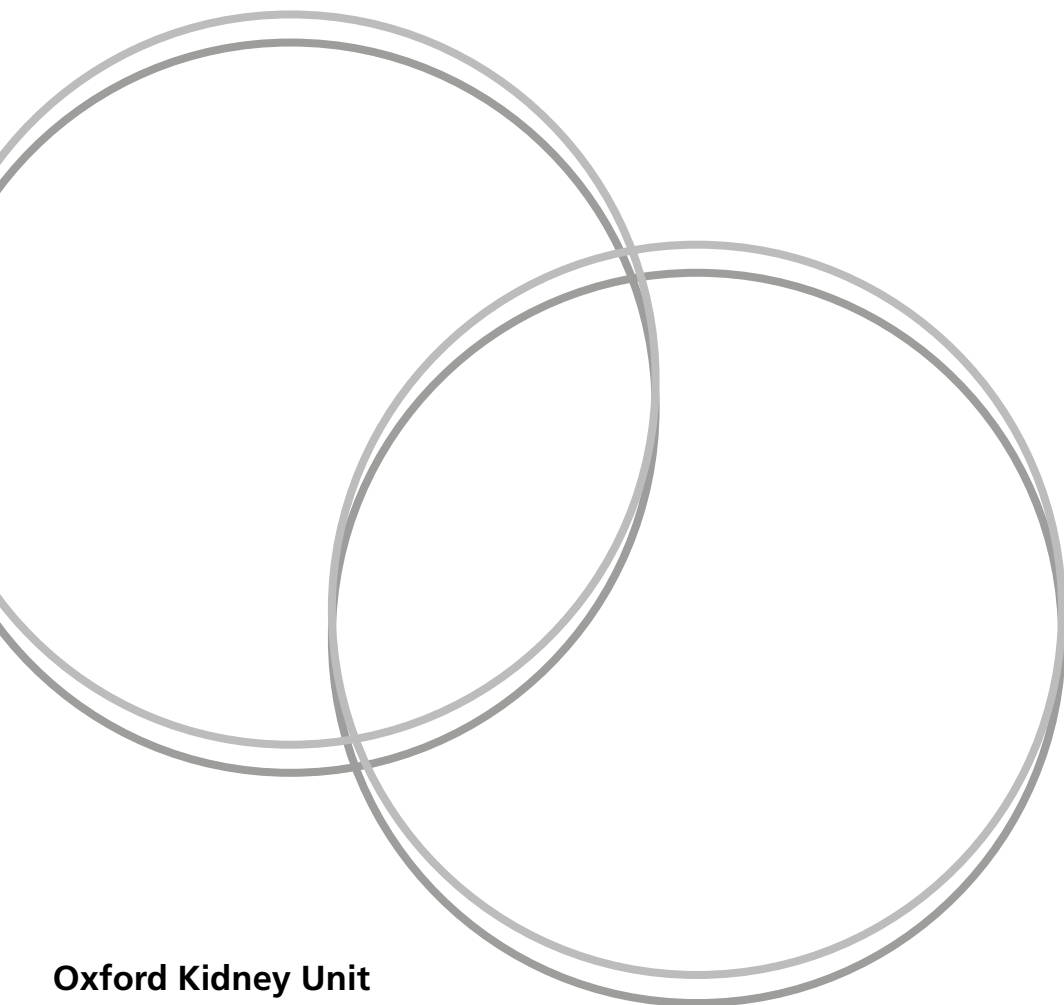




Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Gout: Dietary advice

Information for people with gout



Oxford Kidney Unit

This leaflet is for you if you are suffering from gout. It will give you information to help manage your symptoms.

## **What is gout?**

Gout causes flare-ups of painful arthritis in the joints. The joint most affected by gout is the big toe, but other areas, such as the knees, ankles and wrists, can also be affected. If gout remains untreated, the flare-ups can last for a long time and keep coming back.

## **What causes gout?**

Gout is caused by a build-up of uric acid in your blood and muscles. This is known as a 'metabolic disorder'.

The high level of uric acid can cause crystals to form in your joints and kidneys, causing a flare-up. The main aim of treatment is to reduce the levels of uric acid in your blood.

## **What is uric acid?**

Uric acid is created when the body breaks down purines. Purines are found in many foods. Normally, the kidneys remove uric acid, which passes out in your urine.

## **What are the risk factors for developing gout?**

High uric acid levels are more commonly seen in patients with high cholesterol, high levels of triglycerides, high blood pressure and poor blood glucose control. Being also overweight increases the production of uric acid in the body and reduces the amount that can be removed by your kidneys. Being very overweight (obese) can also affect your body's ability to break down sugar, which can also lead to high uric acid levels.

Improving your diet and reducing your weight gradually should improve overall health and reduce the frequency and severity of flare-ups. Try to avoid crash, yo-yo dieting and fasting. These can make your kidneys hold onto uric acid, making your symptoms worse. Achieving or maintaining a healthy weight also helps to relieve pain on your joints.

**Below are some top tips for healthy eating and weight loss:**

- Eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day in a variety of colours.
- Try to limit snacks between meals. If you need a snack, choose lower calorie options like vegetable sticks, a piece of fruit or a handful of plain popcorn or try sugar-free gum or sweets in between meals.
- Choose low-sugar and low-fat products.
- Have less foods high in sugar and fat, such as biscuits, chocolate, cake, sweets, crisps, sugar-sweetened drinks, butter and oils and fatty red meats.
- Eat plenty of wholegrain starchy foods rather than white refined foods, as these are high in fibre.
- Use healthy cooking methods (grilling, dry roasting or steaming).
- Make sure your meals are a sensible size – you could try using a smaller plate.
- Keep yourself occupied; boredom can lead you into the kitchen.
- Be as active as you can to burn excess calories

## Which foods should be avoided?

To help prevent sudden attacks of gout and reduce the frequency of attacks, aim to eat a healthy balanced diet but reduce the number of high purine foods.

### **High purine foods (to avoid):**

- offal, e.g. liver and kidney
- game, e.g. pheasant, rabbit and venison
- seafood, e.g. prawns, mussels, clams
- oily fish e.g. anchovies, mackerel, herring, sardines

### **Low purine foods (can be eaten freely):**

- fruits and vegetables. Aim for at least 5 portions per day
- dairy, such as milk, yogurts and cheese. Aim to choose lower fat varieties
- dairy-free alternatives, such as soya and other plant-based products
- eggs
- bread and cereals not containing bran
- pasta, rice and noodles
- nuts
- beans, lentils and pulses.

# Should I make other changes to my diet?

## **Protein foods:**

Poultry, red meat and fish can be eaten in moderation.

## **Sugary food:**

Sweetened food can increase your risk of gout developing. Try to reduce consumption of foods high in refined sugar e.g. biscuits and cakes.

## **Drinks:**

Try to avoid becoming dehydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day. You should try to drink at least 2 litres (3 and a half pints) each day, with more in the summer months or when exercising. If you have kidney or heart failure and have been advised to follow a fluid restriction, talk to your dialysis nurse, dietitian or doctor about your fluid levels.

Drinking sugar-sweetened drinks, such as fizzy drinks, fruit juices and smoothies increases the amount of uric acid in the body and may cause gout flare-ups. Try to replace these drinks with water, tea, coffee or no added sugar or low sugar soft drinks.

## **Alcohol:**

All alcohol can make gout worse but especially beer, ale, fortified wine and port. Try to avoid alcohol during an attack of gout. If you are prone to gout attacks keep alcohol drinks to a minimum or don't drink alcohol at all.

## **How to contact us**

### **Oxford Renal Dietitians**

Telephone: **01865 225 061**

(8.00am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday)

Please leave a message on the answerphone and one of the dietitians will get back to you.

We can only provide advice or information if we care for you under the Oxford Kidney or Transplant Unit (Churchill Hospital).

This includes the network units at Banbury, High Wycombe, Milton Keynes, Stoke Mandeville, Swindon (Great Western Hospital) and Whitehouse Dialysis Unit. If you do not attend these sites, please contact your local care team for support.

### **Clinics**

If you are seeing a kidney doctor, the dietitians are available in the Renal Outpatient clinic at the Churchill Hospital each morning. Please speak to the receptionist if you would like to be seen.

### **Renal Network Clinics**

Some of these clinics are covered by a dietitian. Please ask the receptionist if you would like to be seen.

## **Useful websites**

### **UK Gout Society**

This website has lots more information about managing gout.

Website: [www.ukgoutsociety.org](http://www.ukgoutsociety.org)

### **NHS Choices**

This has useful information about gout.

Website: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/gout/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/gout/)

### **NHS Weight Loss Plan**

This has useful information about losing weight and links to a 12 week diet and exercise plan.

Website: [www.nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight/](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight/)

### **Oxford Kidney Unit**

Lots of information about the Oxford Kidney Unit for patients and carers.

Website: [www.ouh.nhs.uk/oku](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/oku)

## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: Oxford Kidney Unit, Renal Dietitian Team  
January 2025  
Review: January 2028  
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)



*Making a difference across our hospitals*

[charity@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:charity@ouh.nhs.uk) | 01865 743 444 | [hospitalcharity.co.uk](http://hospitalcharity.co.uk)

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

