

SPEAKING OF... GOUT (A FORM OF ARTHRITIS)

Gout happens 3 times more to men than women. It is a painful condition that can last a long time. Gout is a form of arthritis called inflammatory arthritis. In an inflammatory condition, the immune system is overactive. This causes the body to attack its' own tissue; it is called "auto" (self) "immune" (destroy). Gout happens when there is too much uric acid in the body. Usually this is because the kidneys don't remove enough uric acid; sometimes it is because the body just makes too much uric acid. Almost all Gout attacks start with one joint in the big toe. Over often. The attacks don't go away on their own.

Could you have Gout? Gout is a genetic disorder and can be inherited. More African-American men have gout than men who are white. Other conditions may also happen, such as kidney problems, heart disease, being overweight and high cholesterol and triglycerides. There are better results if gout is caught early and treatment is started right away.

How is Gout diagnosed? A doctor or Nurse Practitioner will examine the place that hurts. He or she will ask about your family history. There will be an X-Ray or ultrasound test. A sample of fluid will be taken to look for crystals of uric acid.

What is the Treatment? Gout attacks are called 'flares. There are medicines that can help keep flares down, but it is very important that the medicines be taken exactly as the doctor says. Doctors will want to monitor the results to make sure the medicines are working as they should. There are medicines to help lower the amount of urate in the blood, which helps keep flares from happening. This is called 'urate lowering therapy'.

Speaking Of... is a free education series from the National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses (NAON) about medical conditions of the bones and joints, in plain language



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Therapeutic approaches in the treatment of gout. In *Seminars in Arthritis and Rheumatism* (Vol. 50, No. 3, pp. S24-S30). WB Saunders.