Diet and nutrition advice when you have gout

Dietetics and Nutrition service

Information for Patients

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What is gout?

Gout is a form of arthritis. It affects between 1 to 2 in every 100 adults in the UK. It is caused by having too much uric acid in your blood. This can lead to crystals of uric acid forming within or around the joints, causing swelling (inflammation). The symptoms include very bad pain, redness, swelling, discomfort and limited movement. Gout usually affects the joints (e.g. knee) mainly the big toe. It is the most preventable form of arthritis in the world.

How do uric acid crystals develop?

Purines are natural substances that are made by the body and taken in with food. Purines are broken down into uric acid when food is digested. Uric acid is normally removed in the urine by the kidneys.

If not enough purine is removed, or if you eat a lot of purine rich foods, the levels of uric acid can build up in the blood. These form solid crystals around the joint tissues such as cartilage. If left untreated, high levels of uric acid can increase your risk of heart disease.

Risk factors

You may be more likely to get gout if you have:

- A family history of gout.
- Obesity, high blood pressure or diabetes.
- Kidney disease.
- A high alcohol intake (often drinking more than 14 units a week).
- High cholesterol
- Had a surgery or injury
- Been through the menopause
- Osteoarthritis

How can gout be managed?

Your symptoms can be managed with medical treatments and lifestyle changes. This leaflet focuses on changes to your diet. If you would like to know more about medications for gout, please talk to your doctor, or visit www.ukgoutsociety.org.

Healthy weight

Having a healthy lifestyle can help to reduce gout flares and symptoms. Being overweight or obese may increase your risk of gout or make the symptoms worse. If you would like help to lose weight, talk to your GP or Dietitian, or visit www.nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight/.

Alcohol

Drinking a lot of alcohol can make your symptoms worse, or more likely to happen more often.

Current national guidelines advise that both men and women should avoid drinking more than 14 units of alcohol in a week on a regular basis. (For example, a typical ‘single’ measure of vodka (25 ml) is 1 unit, a pint of 4% lager is 2.3 units).

All types of alcohol can increase your risk of repeated gout attacks.

For more information on reducing the amount of alcohol you drink, please talk to your GP or visit: www.drinkaware.co.uk.

Diet

Research around gout and diet has varied results. At the moment there is limited evidence to suggest that any specific type of diet stops flare-ups. Current clinical guidelines recommend that you should aim to have a healthy, balanced diet along with avoiding food with high levels of purine.

Some studies suggest that a low purine diet and eating less calories may help manage gout. Please talk to your Dietitian if you are not sure which approach is right for you.

Low-purine diet

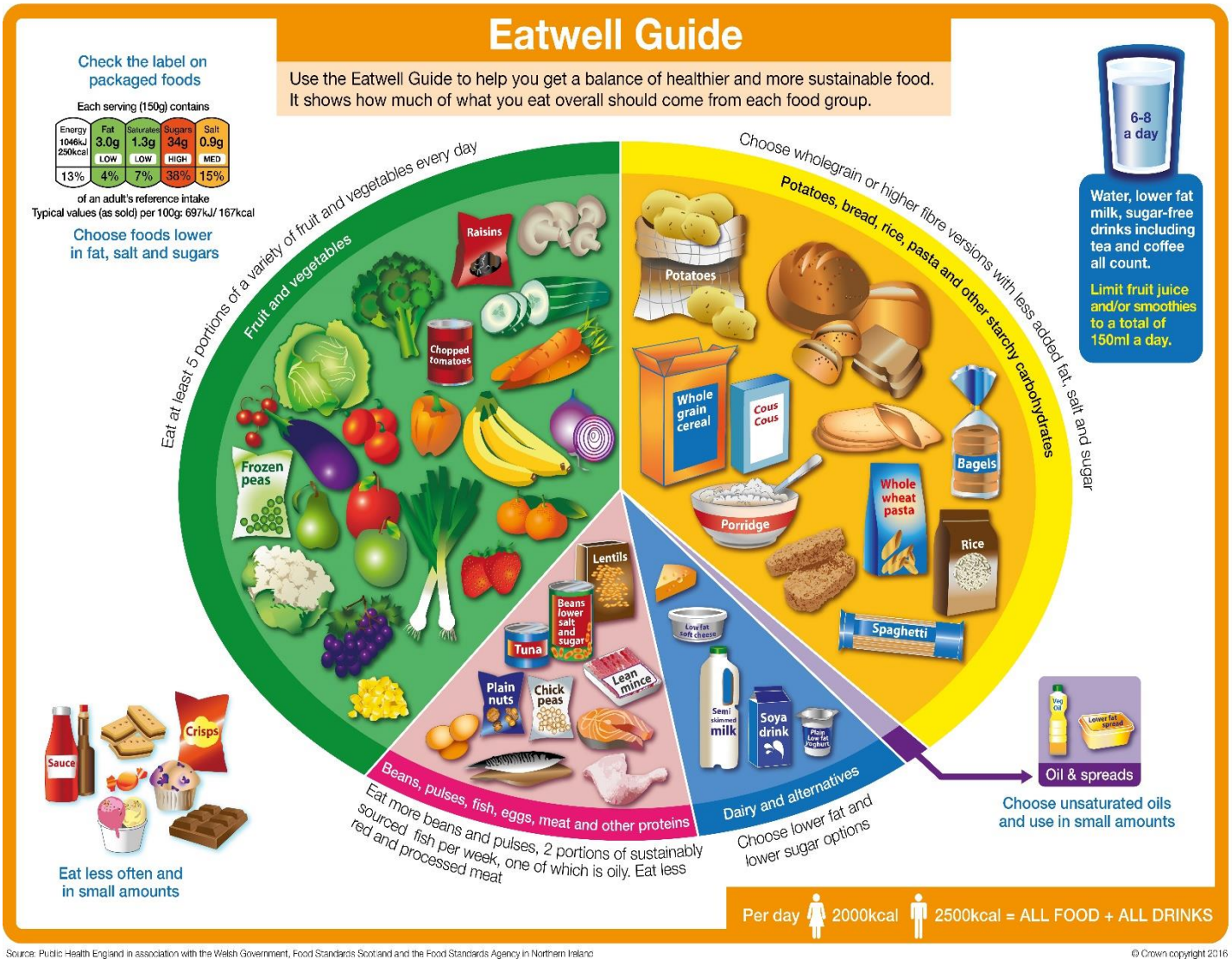
Purines are broken down into uric acid. They are part of a normal diet and cannot be avoided completely. You can try to reduce the amount of purines in your diet by eating less of the ’high purine’ foods (see table on p3).

Tip: focus on the portion size and frequency. You do not have to completely remove any of these foods from your diet.

Purine content	Food	Portion size
High Avoid eating regularly	Offal - liver and kidneys, heart and sweetbreads	85-90g
	Game - pheasant, rabbit, venison	90g
	Oily fish - anchovies, herring, mackerel, sardines, sprats, whitebait, trout	140g, palm of hand
	Seafood - especially mussels, crab, shrimps and other shellfish, fish roe, caviar	85g
	Meat and yeast extracts - Marmite, Bovril, gravy granules	Marmite: 8g Bovril: 12 g Gravy: 50ml
Medium Eat smaller portions, less frequently (in moderation)	Meat - beef, lamb, chicken, pork	90g, palm of hand
	Poultry - chicken and duck	90g, palm of hand
	Dried peas, beans and legumes - baked beans, kidney beans, soya beans and peas	150g or 4 tablespoons
	Mushrooms and mycoprotein (for example, Quorn™)	100g or 4 tablespoons
	Some vegetables - asparagus, cauliflower, spinach	80g
	Wholegrains - bran, oat bran, wholemeal bread	One medium slice of bread (34-36g) 30-40g of cereal (3 tablespoons)
Low No restrictions	Dairy - preferably low or reduced fat	A small matchbox-sized piece of cheese 200ml glass of milk 125 to 150g yoghurt
	Eggs	120g – 2 medium
	Bread and cereals (except wholegrain)	1 medium slice of bread (34 to 36g) 30 to 40g of cereal (3 tablespoons)
	Pasta and noodles	75g uncooked/150g cooked
	Fruit Vegetables (see moderate purine list)	80g, for example 1 medium apple, banana or pear, ½ a pepper or 7 cherry tomatoes

Healthy eating

Making sure that you eat a healthy, balanced diet is key to prevent a lack of essential vitamins and minerals (micronutrient deficiencies) that could make you unwell. Use the Eatwell guide to help you make good dietary choices and maintain a healthy body weight. You can also use the layout of the plate in the picture to help you balance your meals.



- Aim to have 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day (80g is 1 portion).
- Try to limit how much salt (sodium) you eat (no more than 6g a day, equal to 1 teaspoon).
- Try to reduce how much sugar you eat by cutting back on added sugars, for example from sweetened drinks, sweets and chocolate.
- Use unsaturated fats (for example olive oil) and try to reduce saturated fats (for example from fatty cuts of meat, lard).
- You could reduce the amount of fat you eat by swapping full fat dairy for reduced or low-fat options.
- Have lean proteins such as fish, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds and pulses.

Fibre

Some studies suggest that having a high fibre diet (30 grams of fibre a day) can help to reduce swelling caused by gout.

Which foods are high in fibre?

Foods	Portion size	Grams of fibre
Ready Brek	30g	2g
Porridge*	30g	4g
Wholemeal bread*	Thick slice	3g
Weetabix*	1 biscuit	2g
Wholemeal pasta*	100g	4g
Apple	Medium	2g
Pear	Medium	5g
Strawberries	100g	4g
Baked beans*	200g	7g
Broccoli	100g	3g
Raw peppers	80g	2g
Brussel sprouts	3 sprouts	3g
Peanuts	30g	3g
Jacket potato with skin on	150g	3g
Wholegrain rice*	100g	2g
Quorn™ pieces*	50g	4g

*Eat in moderation if you are on a low purine diet.

Vitamin C

There is some limited evidence to suggest that eating foods that have more Vitamin C, for example: cherries, sour cherry juice or a supplement can reduce the risk of gout flare-ups.

If you are thinking of taking an over-the-counter supplement, get advice from your doctor or pharmacist.

Fluid

Drinking more fluid can help your kidneys remove uric acid. This is very important during a gout flare-up. Aim to drink at least 8 large glasses of fluid each day. If you have kidney disease or take water tablets, such as furosemide, make sure you talk to your doctor before drinking more fluids.

Tips

- Keep hydrated (8 to 10 glasses of fluids a day)
- Avoid crash dieting and fasting
- Reduce alcohol and sugary drink consumption
- Avoid purine rich foods

Contact details

If you need any more information, please talk to your Dietitian.

Dietetics and Nutrition Service

University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust

Dietitian: _____

Phone number: 0116 258 5400

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.

To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

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