

GOUT

Overview

This condition is a form of inflammatory arthritis that results in painful attacks on the joints. It can cause swelling and redness, and in some cases, it can lead to lumpy deposits that can be seen under the skin. It can also lead to the development of kidney stones.

Causes

Gout is caused by a build-up of uric acid crystals in the joints. Uric acid is a waste product formed during the breakdown of certain foods. In a healthy person, uric acid is removed from the blood by the kidneys and excreted in the urine. In a person with gout, the kidneys fail to remove enough uric acid.

Food Triggers

Gout can be triggered by eating foods that are high in purines, which are naturally-occurring compounds commonly found in animal cells. Purine-rich foods include red meat (especially organ meat), bacon, certain types of seafood, alcohol, foods that contain yeast, and gravies and rich sauces. Some vegetables are also high in purines. These include peas, beans, lentils, spinach, asparagus, mushrooms, and cauliflower.

Other Risk Factors

Uric acid level fluctuations can also be triggered by other factors such as trauma, medications, chemotherapy, dehydration, and starvation. Gout is more common in men than women, and it is more common in older people. Being overweight can also increase the risk of the disease.

Symptoms

In many cases, the first joint affected is the big toe. The ankles, knees, wrists and elbows are also commonly affected. A gout flareup can lead to intense pain, swelling and redness in the affected joints. The joints may become warm and stiff, and the person may develop a fever. An attack usually lasts for 3 to 10 days, and then subsides on its own. The next attack may not occur for months or years. With time, attacks may occur more frequently and last for longer periods.

Treatment

Treatment options include medications to decrease the severity of attacks, modification of diet, weight loss, exercise and drinking plenty of water.

