Gout – Not just an illness for the wealthy

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Uric Acid Crystals in Big Toe Joint

Gout was long considered the illness of the “wealthy,” since attacks of the disease were thought to occur after overindulging in rich food and drink. It is true that a rich diet can play a part in the onset of gout, but researchers have also linked the condition to a genetic predisposition that is unrelated to diet. It is most simply the body producing too much uric acid that is not being eliminated properly.

Although gout can sometimes be difficult to diagnose and can be confused with other illnesses, such as a sprain or infection, the best way the physician can determine its presence is by measuring the amount of uric acid in the blood, as well as evaluating the patient’s medical history. Symptoms of gout include sudden, often severe, pain and tenderness, and redness, warmth and swelling in affected joints.

To determine the amount of uric acid in the blood, the physician will extract fluid from the affected joint, called synovial fluid, with a needle and examine the fluid under a microscope. Treating Gout

Unfortunately, there is no permanent cure for gout, but the discomfort can be managed and future attacks can often be prevented or lessened in severity. If you suspect a gout attack, it is wise to see your doctor as soon as possible since treatment is most effective when started within 12 hours and is easier to diagnose when an attack is in progress.

Anti-inflammatory or corticosteroid drugs may be injected directly into the affected joint, granting relief within a short period of time. If this does not promote relief, the physician may prescribe colchicines (which reduce inflammation) either orally or by intravenous injection. Lower doses of both drugs, as well as lifestyle changes, are often prescribed to reduce or prevent future gout attacks. Complications

It is estimated that about 20 percent of gout sufferers also suffer from kidney stones. Drinking lots of water can often flush small stones from the kidneys, but larger stones can actually interfere with kidney function and create intense pain, nausea, vomiting, blood in the urine, chills and fever. Ultrasound waves are used to break up larger stones or they may be surgically removed.

Preventing Gout

There are ways to help your body prevent the build-up of uric acid: Drinking lots of fluids, especially water, to prevent dehydration which reduces kidney function and can lead to uric acid build up. Reducing the amount of meat in your diet, which is rich in uric acid, and instead eating plenty of raw fruit, vegetables, grains, seeds and nuts. Avoiding alcohol. Exercising regularly, and avoiding both rapid weight loss or excess body weight. EVENTS - Call 760-773-4535 for information and reservations Art and Arthritis (The Renoir Effect) TU (Oct 4 through Oct 25), 2 to 3 p.m. $20 for 4-weeks session.

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