

URIC ACID

A uric acid blood test, also known as a serum uric acid measurement, determines how much uric acid is present in your blood. The test can help determine how well your body produces and removes uric acid.

Uric acid is a chemical produced when your body breaks down foods that contain organic compounds called purines. Foods and beverages with a high purine content include:

- liver
- anchovies
- mackerel
- dried beans
- beer
- wine

Most uric acid is dissolved in the blood, filtered through the kidneys, and expelled in the urine. Sometimes the body produces too much uric acid or doesn't filter out enough of it.

High levels of uric acid are associated with a condition called gout. [Gout](#) is a form of arthritis that causes swelling of the joints, especially in the feet and big toes.

What are the symptoms of gout?

People with gout get sudden "flares" or attacks of severe pain in the feet and big toes. Often the joint also turns red and swells. Usually, only 1 joint is affected, but some people have pain in more than 1 joint. Gout flares tend to happen more often during the night.

The pain from gout can be extreme. The pain and swelling are worst at the beginning of a gout flare. The symptoms then get better within a few days to weeks

Can I do anything on my own to prevent gout flares?

Yes. In general, a healthy diet includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products. It's also important to drink plenty of water, and try not to get dehydrated.

You should stay away from these types of food:

- Beer and grain liquors (like vodka and whiskey)
- Red meat, lamb, and pork
- Organ meats, such as [liver](#), [kidneys](#), and glandular meats like the thymus or [pancreas](#) (you may hear them called sweetbreads)
- Seafood, especially shellfish like shrimp, lobster, mussels, anchovies, and sardines
- High-fructose products like soda and some juices, [cereal](#), [ice cream](#), candy, and fast food

You'll want to go for low-purine options like:

- Low-fat and nondairy [fat](#) products, such as yogurt and skim milk

- Fresh [fruits and vegetables](#)
- Nuts, peanut butter, and grains
- Fat and oil
- Potatoes, rice, [bread](#), and pasta
- [Eggs](#) (in moderation)
- Meats like [fish](#), chicken, and red meat are fine in moderation (around 4 to 6 ounces per day).
- Vegetables: You may see veggies like spinach and asparagus on the high-purine list, but studies show they don't raise your risk of gout or gout attacks.

Foods aren't the only thing that can affect uric acid. What you drink matters, too.

Dos

It's a good idea to drink lots of fluids -- 8 to 16 cups a day. At least half of what you drink should be [water](#). [Vitamin C](#) (think orange juice) also can help lower uric acid, but studies also show that the high fructose in OJ may boost uric acid levels, so drink it in moderation. Caffeinated [coffee](#) can cut uric acid, too, as long as you don't overdo it.

Don'ts

Stay away from sugary drinks like soda and fruit juice. You also may need to limit or avoid [alcohol](#) as well. Talk with your doctor to find out what's right for you.

While a healthy diet can help control how much uric acid is in your system, you may still need medicine to prevent future attacks. Talk with your doctor about all your treatment options.