

April 2011 is Homeopathy Awareness Month
Homeopathy for Musculoskeletal Health; Freedom from Mobility Restrictions

Homeopathic Medicine for Relief from the Pain of Gout

by Sonia Ramchandani, DSHomMed

Ouch! The next time you have a pain in the big toe and it feels like a jolt of fire with each step you take, you may want to get it checked out for gout.

Gout, or gouty arthritis, is characterized by the sudden onset of severe pain or tenderness in an affected joint, most often the big toe. Other areas that may be affected include the knee, ankle, foot, hand, wrist and even fingers. The first symptom is usually acute pain. As time goes on, the affected joints become inflamed, red, swollen, hot and extremely sensitive to the touch, and in some cases there is fever or chills. Frequent attacks of gout over a long period of time can lead to joint damage.

Gout was once referred to as the "rich man's disease," as it has been associated with too much rich food and alcohol, but in fact it does affect people of all walks of life.

It typically affects men between the ages of 40 and 50, but occasionally can occur in younger men. About 90% of the people who suffer from gout are men. Women are usually protected because of female hormones, and tend mostly to develop gout after menopause.

According to the book, *Prescription for Nutritional Healing* by Phyllis and James Balch, gout occurs when there is too much uric acid in the blood, tissues and urine. Uric acid is the end product of the metabolism of a class of chemicals known as purines. In people with gout, the body does not produce enough of the digestive enzyme uricase, which oxidizes relatively insoluble uric acid into a higher soluble compound. As a result, uric acid accumulates in the blood and tissues, and ultimately crystallizes. About 70% of people who suffer from Gout produce too much uric acid, and 30% cannot properly eliminate it from their bodies, and about 25% have a family history of gout. Elevated levels of uric acid in the blood can also be an indicator of poor kidney function.

Because uric acid is a byproduct of certain foods, gout is closely related to diet. Obesity and an improper diet increase the risk of developing gout. It also may be inherited or brought on by crash dieting, drinking, certain medications, overeating, stress, surgery or joint injury.

Homeopathy can provide a measure of relief during painful attacks of joint pain and inflammation, and also may help to reduce the likelihood of further episodes.

Homeopathy is a form of energy medicine that seeks to stimulate the body's own defence system to heal body, mind and spirit in harmony and restore balance, rather than merely to use drugs to suppress symptoms.

Treatment involves giving very small doses of substances called remedies that, according to homeopathy, would produce the same symptoms of illness in healthy people if they were given in larger doses.

Homeopathic practitioners select remedies according to the total picture of the patient, not only based on the physical symptoms, but lifestyle, character, mental and emotional state, stress levels, diet, family history and other general factors in order to prescribe the best remedy. Homeopathic treatments are highly individualized. Two people with gout are treated as distinct individuals, each uniquely influenced by the many factors as mentioned above, with each patient being prescribed a remedy that matches their symptoms.

Treatment may also include dietary and lifestyle changes, and recommendations for vitamin and herbal supplements for a speedy recovery.

NATURAL PRODUCTS FOR RELIEF FROM GOUT: HOMEOPATHIC REMEDIES

Although the remedies mentioned below are some of the most common remedies for gout, they are only a few of the many possible choices:

Arnica: This remedy is used when the pain is sore and bruised, such as it hurts to walk. The person may be afraid to be touched or approached because of pain.

Belladonna: Symptoms that suggest this remedy are sudden onset. Joints are swollen, red, throbbing and extremely sensitive. It's worse from touch and jarring. The person may feel restless, flushed and hot.

Benzoic acid: This is used for gout, especially of the knee or big toe. Tearing and stitching pain in the affected joint, for acute rheumatism and gout with stiffness, swelling and lameness. Also, symptoms of gout associated with highly-coloured and offensive urine. Symptoms are worse in open air and from uncovering the affected parts.

Berberis vulgaris: This remedy is indicated when there are sudden twinges of pain — stitching pains in gouty joints, which are worse from motion. The pains often radiate out from the affected part or move to a different area all together. The person has a tendency towards kidney stones and may ache all over.

Colchicum: Gout in the big toe or heel so painful that the person cannot bear to have it touched or moved. Joints are red, hot and swollen. The pain is often worse in the evening and at night. Pains are worse in cold, damp weather and flare-ups may occur with weather changes or in the spring. The person often has a feeling of internal coldness.

Ledum: This remedy is indicated when the gouty pains shoot through the foot, limb and joints – especially the small joints. The foot and ankle are extremely swollen. Cold or ice cold applications relieve the pain and swelling.

Lycopodium: This remedy is for chronic gout, with chalky deposits in the joints. There is a pain in the heels on treading, as from a pebble. One foot feels hot and the other cold. The urine is slow to produce and has a heavy, red sediment. There may be a backache, which is relieved by passing urine. The right side of the body is particularly affected and all the complaints seem to be worse, especially between 4pm and 8pm. This individual is apprehensive and afraid to be alone. Though they lack self-confidence, they are haughty and headstrong when sick.

Urtica urens: This remedy helps in the elimination of uric acid from the body. The patient has a tendency to gout and uric acid formations. The joint symptoms are associated with hive-like eruptions. There is pain in the shoulders (deltoid region), wrists and ankles. The patient is worse from exposure to cool moist air, snow-air, water and touch. Select the remedy that most closely matches the symptoms. Unless otherwise recommended most acute cases can be addressed with 12C or 30C potency.

Take one dose and wait for a response. If improvement is seen, continue to wait and let the remedy work. If no improvement, another dose may be taken. The frequency of dosage varies with the condition and the individual. Sometimes a dose may be required several times an hour; other times a dose may be indicated several times a day; and in some situations, one dose per day can be sufficient.

If no response is seen within a reasonable amount of time, contact a homeopath for consultation.

DIETARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain a diet low in purines. Purine-rich foods to avoid include: anchovies; mackerel; shellfish; asparagus; herring; meat gravies and broths; mushrooms; mussels; sardines; scallops; peanuts; baker's and brewer's yeast; mincemeat and sweetbreads; red meat; organ meats; goose and duck.
- Limit intake of caffeine, cauliflower, dried beans, lentils, peas, oatmeal, spinach and yeast products.
- Consume plenty of purified water as this promotes the excretion of uric acid and prevents development of kidney stones.
- Drink fresh or frozen cherry juice as it prevents uric acid crystals from forming. Blueberries, cherries and strawberries neutralize uric acid and have antioxidant properties so eat more of them.
- Enjoy foods such as rice, millet, starchy vegetables, green vegetables, corn, cornbread, fruit, eggs, nuts, and herbal teas.
- Avoid alcohol as it may provoke acute attacks.
- The gout diet should be high in complex carbohydrates and low in protein.

Supplements

- Burdock tea or capsules slow the formation of crystals and cleanse the blood.
- Celery tea or capsules contain anti-inflammatory compounds.
- Essential fatty acids (Omega 3 oils), bromelain, turmeric, boswellia also have anti-inflammatory compounds.
- Vitamin C with bioflavonoids helps lowers serum uric acid levels and Vitamin E (d-alpha-tocopherol form) is an antioxidant and improves circulation.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

In homeopathy, the approach to illness is to treat the whole person and not only the presenting symptoms of the disease. Thus, rather than treating the disease therapeutically, knowing a person's constitutional type helps the homeopath choose the most appropriate remedy. While the homeopathic remedies listed above are commonly used, for best results the individual should consult a qualified homeopath. Homeopathy is often helpful to fortify one's natural healing mechanism for gout and other ailments. In conjunction with taking the appropriate homeopathic remedy, it is necessary to maintain a diet low in purines, as mentioned above, to manage this condition.

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