

When Gout Goes Untreated

What Happens When Gout is Allowed to Progress?

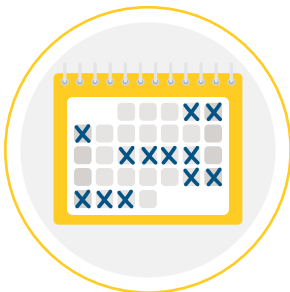
Prioritizing one's health can be a challenge. But for people with gout – a debilitating form of inflammatory arthritis that affects more than 9 million Americans – delaying visits with a health care provider or downplaying symptoms can have serious consequences.

Gout occurs due to a buildup of uric acid in the body. When gout goes untreated, several things can happen.



Uric acid crystals build up.

Excess uric acid accumulates and can form deposits around the joints known as tophi. These are most likely to develop in people with chronic, uncontrolled gout.



Gout attacks become worse and more frequent.

Flares happen when uric acid crystals attack one or more joints in the body, causing painful, red and swollen joints. Acute gout attacks can last anywhere from a few hours to a few days. They can occur a couple of times a year or, if gout is left untreated, can last longer and become more frequent.



Joint damage occurs.

If gout goes untreated, uric acid crystals will compound under the skin and in the affected joint. Tophi can eat away at the bone, limit movement, compress nerves and cause discomfort – even leading to permanent disability.



Surgery may become necessary.

Some patients may need to have their tophi surgically removed. Tophi will, however, come back if the patient does not also manage uric acid levels with urate-lowering medication.

The best way to avoid disease progression and tophi is to proactively manage gout from the outset.

A gout specialist may recommend medication to lower uric acid levels or prescribe new biologic medication that removes uric acid crystals from the body and dissolves tophi more quickly.

Whatever the treatment regimen, working with a gout specialist to achieve long-term gout management is crucial to staying healthy and flare free.



The Alliance for Gout Awareness works to reduce stigma and empower patients by improving public understanding of gout.