



Blood pressure diet may help for gout

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A new research confirms that a healthy diet can effectively lower the blood levels of uric acid. But, this research says that same diet [DASH: Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension] that helps to reduce blood pressure can also help ease gout symptoms.

Gout is caused by a build-up of uric acid in the blood. The major symptoms include sharp burning pain in toe, foot or leg. Diet has long been considered as an important way to lower uric acid levels to prevent gout attacks. Researchers said that dietary approach should be considered as first-line therapy to prevent gout, because DASH diet worked so well in the study participants.

A study was done on 412 people who ate DASH diet (fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, poultry, whole grains, sodium, red meats, sweets, and saturated fats) for 3 months. For each month of study, the diets provided a different level of sodium in a random order, including low (1.2 grams per day), medium (2.3 grams per day), and a high level (3.4 grams per day). At baseline and at end of each sodium intake period, blood samples were analyzed for a variety of blood markers, including uric acid.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, examined these data to determine how each intervention affected uric acid blood concentrations. They found that DASH diet led to 0.35 milligrams per deciliter decrease in uric acid concentrations. Stephen P. Juraschek, clinical fellow in the Division of General Internal Medicine, "That's a large reduction in uric acid. When you get as high as the reduction we believe occurred with original DASH diet in this study, effect starts being comparable with gout medications." The researchers noted that gout medications, such as allopurinol, often reduce blood uric acid concentrations about 2 milligrams per deciliter.

Juraschek noted that effect of sodium on uric acid concentrations was small, but significant and opposite. In DASH trial, participants were given least sodium and their uric acid concentrations were highest, with slight decreases achieved during medium and high sodium portions of the trial. High sodium levels appear to slightly decrease uric acid concentrations. "More than 70% people with gout have high blood pressure," Juraschek said. As per Edgar R. Miller III, Professor of Medicine, Johns Hopkins, "This study suggests that standard dietary advice for uric acid reduction, which is to reduce alcohol and protein intake, should now include advice to adopt DASH diet."

The findings suggest that the DASH diet may represent an effective, non-pharmacologic approach to prevent flares in gout. That would possibly prevent gout flare-ups for people with mild to moderate gout who cannot or don't want to take gout drugs.

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