

# Healthy Eating for Managing Gout

Gout is when there is a build up of uric acid crystals in a joint, causing pain and swelling. This happens when your body makes too much uric acid or doesn't flush enough of it away.

Your body makes most of the uric acid (70%), while the rest (30%) comes from food and drinks that have a substance called purines in them.

Gout is treated with medicine, but diet changes may help. A diet low in purines used to be recommended to treat gout. Now, research shows that following a healthy diet and maintaining a healthy weight are the best ways to manage gout.

## What changes can I make to manage my gout?

- Reach and stay at a healthy body weight.
- Follow *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*.
- Drink 9 to 12 cups (2.25 to 3 litres) of fluid every day.
- Limit or don't drink alcohol.

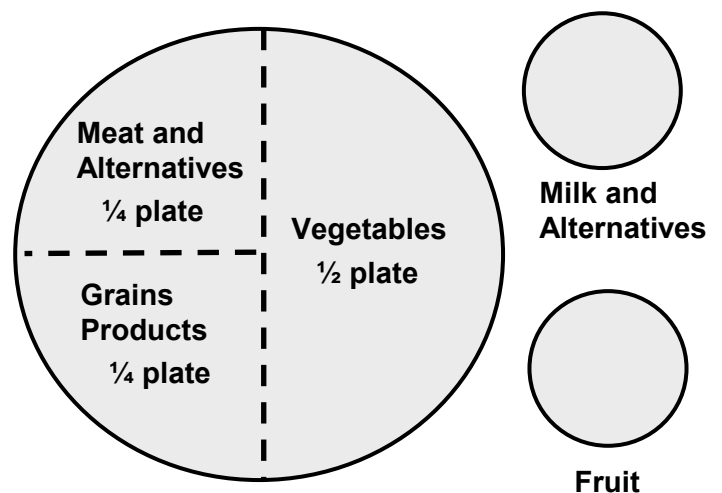
## Reach and stay at a healthy body weight

If you need to lose weight, eat smaller portions of healthy food and increase your activity every day. 0.5 to 2 pounds (0.3 to 1 kg) per week is a good weight loss goal. Losing weight too fast may increase your risk for a gout attack.

## Follow Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide

Use the picture of the healthy meal below to help you plan meals:

- Choose a plate no larger than 9 inches (22.5 cm) across.
- Enjoy a variety of foods from the four food groups on *Canada's Food Guide* every day.
- Fill half your plate with vegetables.



- Include a serving of whole grains such as brown rice, whole grain barley, couscous, or quinoa (1/4 of the plate).
- Include a serving of lean meat or meat alternatives. A serving size is 2.5 oz. (75 grams) or 1/4 of your plate. Keep the total amount to 2-3 servings per day as Canada's Food Guide recommends.
- Aim for 3 servings of low fat dairy products every day. Research suggests that drinking low fat dairy products may lower the risk of repeated gout attacks.
- Include a serving of fruit.

## Drink enough fluids every day

- **Drink 9 to 12 cups (2.25 to 3 litres) of fluids every day.**

- Any liquid can be counted as fluid but the best choice is water. *Canada's Food Guide* suggests limiting sugar-sweetened beverages such as soft drinks, slushies, and fruit flavoured drinks. Choose water or low fat milk or alternatives instead.



- Some research shows that drinking coffee regularly may help reduce uric acid levels in your body. However; because coffee contains caffeine, Health Canada recommends limiting coffee to 3 cups (1 cup is 8 oz or 250 mL) or about 400 mg of caffeine each day.



## Limit or don't drink alcohol

- Alcohol, especially beer and hard liquor, can cause uric acid to build up.
- If you don't drink alcohol, don't start.
- If you drink alcohol, Health Canada advises:
  - women should have no more than 2 drinks per day, and no more than 10 drinks a week
  - men should have no more than 3 drinks per day, and no more than 15 drinks a week
- One drink is:
  - 12 ounces (355 mL) of beer, or
  - 5 ounces (150 mL) of wine, or
  - 1½ ounces (45 mL) of hard liquor

Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about drinking alcohol.

## For more information

You may find these websites helpful:

- [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide): This site provides information about portion sizes and *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. Visit the website or call 1-866-225-0709 for your copy of the Food Guide.
- [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca): Gives information about healthy eating.
- [www.eatracker.ca](http://www.eatracker.ca): A tool to analyze your food choices and help you plan your meals.