

Question and Answer

What is gout? And does it affect diabetics differently than other patients?

Gout is a condition caused by excessive amounts of uric acid in the blood serum or the accumulation of urate crystals in the joints of long bones, such as the big toe joint. Uric acid is a by product of protein metabolism. All people produce uric acid naturally, but when levels are above normal, gout symptoms can occur. If not properly treated for an extended period of time, gouty tophic can occur.

Most people that suffer from gout experience acute attacks that can be alleviated by changes in diet, medications, and with the use of anti-inflammatories. Any diabetic who suffers from gout and has been treated for long term elevations of uric acid levels, needs to be monitored for adequate control of uric acid. Any diabetic who think that they may have gout and needs to seek medical treatment. Left untreated, gout can cause more serious health problems.

My legs swell all the time and I have blisters on them. I am taking water pills and am diabetic? I worry about losing my legs? Any ideas?

(Slides of venous insufficiency)

The condition you described sounds much like venous insufficiency. This is a fairly common condition due to vein damage. Veins are responsible for bringing blood back to the heart against gravity. They are equipped with valves which help to push the blood back against gravity back to the heart. When the valve is damaged, the fluid drains back into the leg with gravity and the lower extremity begins to swell. If the swelling is significant, fluid filled blisters can develop. The leg can become red and sore. The blisters can open sores or venous ulcers. The ulcers occur when the water has no where else to go. The treatment is compression and wound care for the ulcers. Systemic and/or topical antibiotics may also be needed. Of course, kidneys need to be stable, blood sugars need to be controlled, and congestive heart failure needs to be controlled. If you suspect you have this condition, you need to call your primary care physician for a referral to a specialist.

I have diabetic neuropathy and have had a foot ulcer for months. I receive whirlpool therapy three times per week and see no improvement. Are there any other forms of treatment?

Not all diabetic foot ulcers are treated in the same fashion, but it is generally accepted that whirlpool is longer an efficient means of wound debridement for tissue regeneration. The necessary ingredients needed to successfully treat diabetic foot ulcers include, metabolic control of diabetes, adequate circulation, management of infection, reduction of pressure at the site of the wound and occasionally surgical reconstruction.