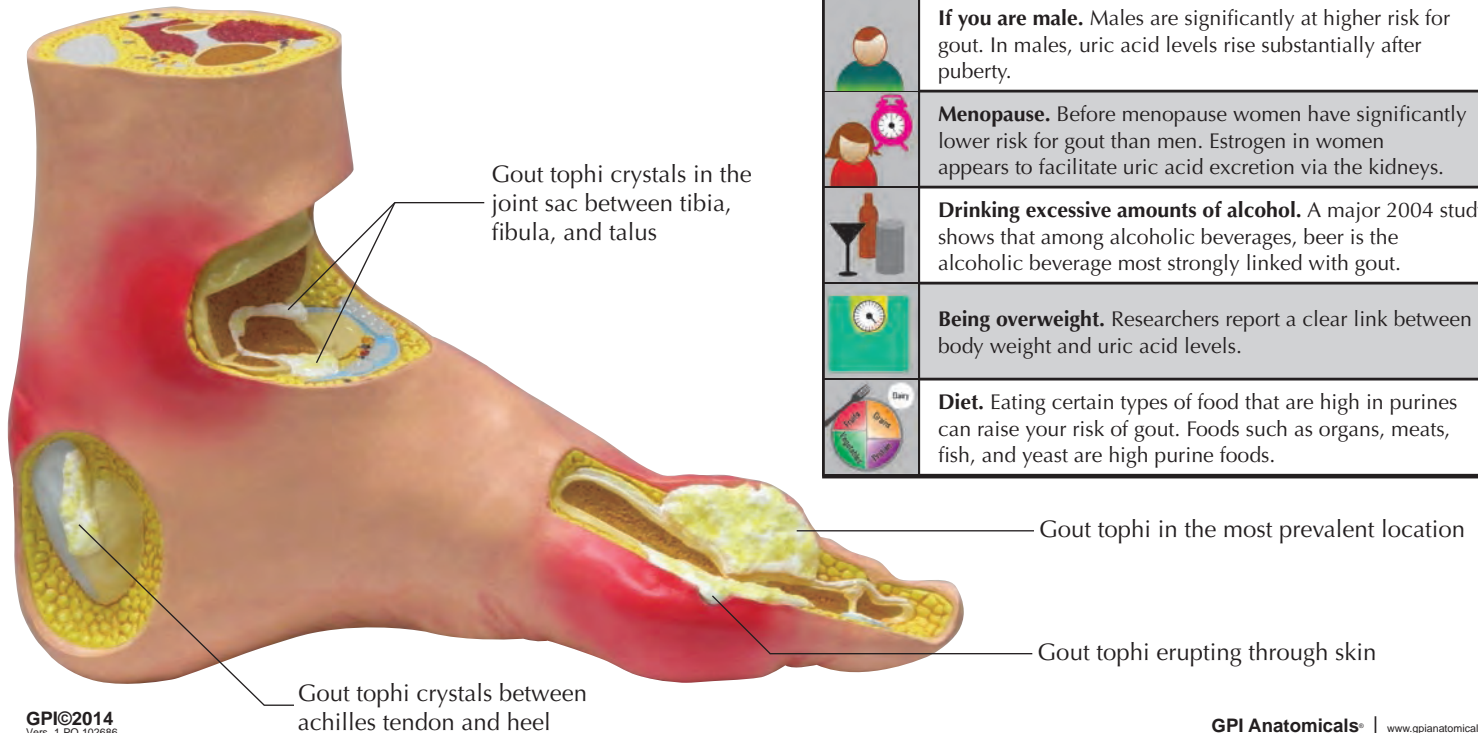


GOUT

Gout is one of the most painful forms of arthritis. It is characterized by sudden, severe attacks of pain, redness and tenderness in the joints. Most commonly these occur in the joint at the base of the big toe. It can also attack ankles, heels, knees, wrists, fingers, and elbows. At first, gout attacks usually get better in days. Eventually, attacks last longer and happen more often.

Gout can be difficult to diagnose, but your doctor can take a sample of fluid from an inflamed joint to look for tophi crystals. Gout can be treated with medicines, and there are ways to reduce the risk that it will recur.

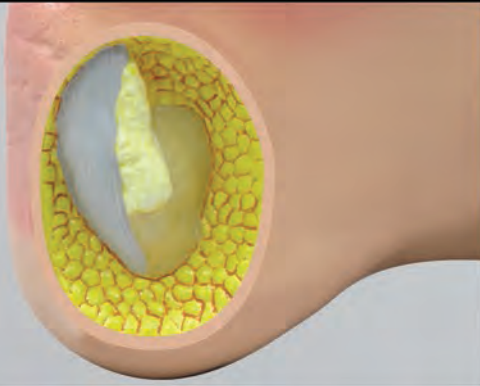


Factors that can increase your chances of getting gout

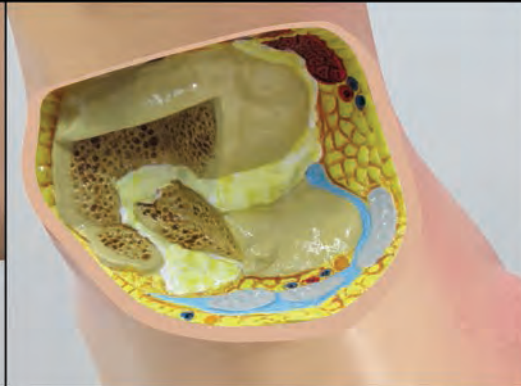
	If someone in your family has gout. Studies show that one in four people with gout have a family history of the illness.
	If you are male. Males are significantly at higher risk for gout. In males, uric acid levels rise substantially after puberty.
	Menopause. Before menopause women have significantly lower risk for gout than men. Estrogen in women appears to facilitate uric acid excretion via the kidneys.
	Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol. A major 2004 study shows that among alcoholic beverages, beer is the alcoholic beverage most strongly linked with gout.
	Being overweight. Researchers report a clear link between body weight and uric acid levels.
	Diet. Eating certain types of food that are high in purines can raise your risk of gout. Foods such as organs, meats, fish, and yeast are high purine foods.

GOUT

Heel



Ankle



Toe



As gout becomes a chronic condition, it can eventually attack other joints besides the site of the original attack. This secondary gout attack can also occur in the Achilles tendon, although it is not a joint. At its worst, gout can cause a spontaneous rupture of the Achilles tendon, according to a National Institutes of Health case report.

After years with the disease, lumps of uric acid, called tophi, may form beneath the skin around the ankles. As chronic gout gets worse, flare-ups occur more often and last longer. Over time, the inflammation causes permanent damage to bone and cartilage.

For many people, the first symptom of gout is excruciating pain and swelling in the big toe – often following a trauma, such as an illness or injury. In some people, the acute pain is so intense that even a bed sheet touching the toe causes severe pain.