

Gout



The Rheumatology service specialises in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases affecting the musculoskeletal system. Other than providing inpatient and outpatient consultation, our patients also benefit from in-house support services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and radiology services including bone densitometry studies. Patients are admitted through the emergency department, referred from polyclinics and general practitioners, or transferred from other departments within the Ng Teng Fong General Hospital or from other healthcare facilities such as nursing homes, community hospitals and other hospitals.

What is gout?

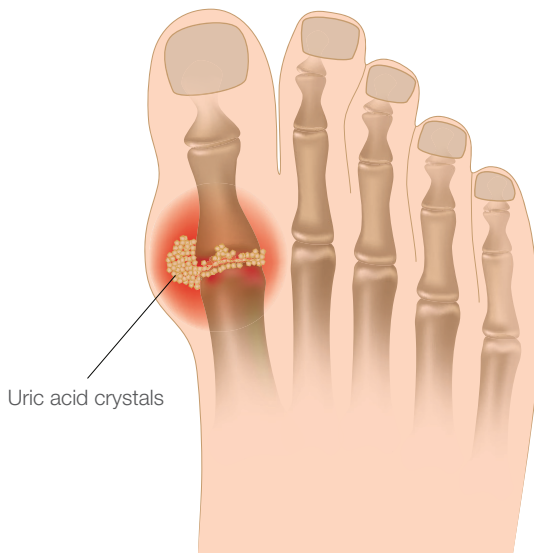
Gout is a chronic condition that causes intermittent, sudden and excruciating pain and swelling in the affected joints. Usually common in the big toe, it can also affect the foot, ankle, heel, instep and knee. If left untreated, gout can lead to permanent disability.

What causes gout?

Some people have high levels of uric acid in the blood. Excess uric acid is deposited as crystals in the joints of the body, tendons and other tissues. These crystals can trigger the body's immune system to cause pain, swelling and inflammation.

What are the symptoms?

Acute gout is a sudden, warm throbbing in the affected joint that can result quickly in extreme pain, redness and swelling. The skin becomes tender and sore, and walking becomes difficult and painful.



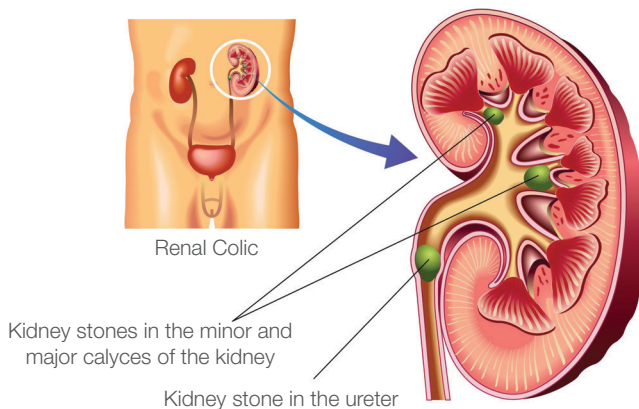
There are four stages of gout:

- **Acute:** the joint may become swollen and tender. If left untreated, attacks become more severe over time and affect more joints
- **Asymptomatic:** patients have increased levels of uric acid in the blood, but do not experience pain or swelling
- **Chronic*:** if the condition is not treated and years of gout attack takes a toll on the affected joints and other organs of the body to cause deformity, chronic pain and immobility.
- **“Interval” gout:** in between gout attacks, patients do not show any symptoms and are still able to use their joints normally, despite high levels of uric acid.

*Chronic: refers to something that continues or persists over an extended period of time, is long-lasting and does not go away easily or quickly.

What are the complications?

Uric acid crystals can be deposited in the kidneys as kidney stones. They cause pain, infection and obstruct urine flow. Clumps of crystals called tophi can form around the joints, tendons, ligaments and even the ear lobes in chronic gout.



What are the risk factors?

Gout affects people between 30 and 40 years old. Although most people diagnosed with gout are men, women can also develop the condition after menopause. Gout is linked to obesity, hypertension, diabetes and genetics. Some drugs such as diuretics or water tablets, which are used to treat hypertension and swelling can trigger gout attacks.

How is a diagnosis made?

Your doctor will conduct a physical examination and blood tests on you. To confirm the diagnosis, a joint aspiration may be conducted. In this procedure, a needle is inserted in the swollen joint, and a sample of the fluid is taken and examined for the presence of uric acid crystals. An X-ray will show the amount of bone and joint damage.

What are the treatment options?

With medication, gout can be completely cured.

Medication

- **NSAIDs** (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) such as diclofenac acid or the newer COX-2 inhibitors (Celebrex and Arcoxia) are often prescribed to reduce pain, swelling and stiffness
- **Colchicine** to relieve pain and prevent acute attacks
- **Steroids** such as prednisolone for an acute attack
- **Steroid injections** into the joints to relieve pain
- **Long term medication** such as allopurinol, probenecid and febuxostat to dissolve uric acid crystals

Diet

Patients are advised to avoid food such as:

- Beer
- Food and drinks that contain fructose
- Sweetened soft drinks

Avoid food that trigger gout attacks and choose low-fat dairy products. It is important to exercise regularly and maintain a healthy weight.

Surgery

Occasionally, surgery is required to remove infected tophi or tophi that interfere with joint movement.



What can I do?

It is possible to prevent the disabilities caused by gout through early diagnosis and treatment. Take all medication prescribed to you to manage your condition.

Notes:

For more information

Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Jurong Community Hospital

1 Jurong East St 21, Singapore 609606

www.ntfgh.com.sg | www.jch.com.sg

Clinic opening hours

Monday – Friday: 8.30am – 5.30pm

Saturday: 8.30am – 12.30pm (Selected clinics only*)

Dental Clinic: Monday – Thursday: 8.00am – 5.30pm, Friday: 8.00am – 5.00pm

*Please refer to our websites for more details.

General enquiries & appointments

General enquiries line: 6908 2222 (24-hr)

Fax: 6716 5500 | Email: contactus@nuhs.edu.sg

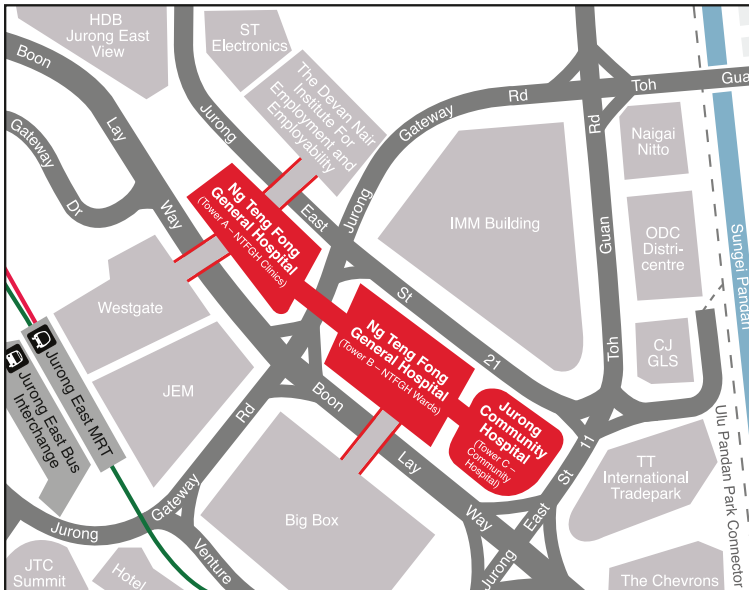
Appointment line: 6908 2222 (Monday – Friday: 8.00am – 5.30pm, Saturday: 8.00am – 12.30pm)

Fax: 6716 2200 | Email: appointment@nuhs.edu.sg

Dental appointment line: 6716 2233 (Monday – Friday: 8.00am – 5.30pm)

Fax: 6716 2200 | Email: JHCampus_Dental@nuhs.edu.sg

Getting there



By train

Alight at Jurong East MRT Station

By bus

Jurong East Bus Interchange

41, 49, 51, 52, 66, 66B, 78, 78A, 79, 79A, 97, 97E, 98, 98M, 105, 143, 143M, 160, 160A, 160M, 183, 183B, 197, 333, 334, 335, 506

Along Boon Lay Way

49, 99, 333, Private bus service 625, 990

Disclaimer:

The information in this brochure is meant for educational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Please seek your doctor's advice before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical condition. Information is accurate at the time of printing.