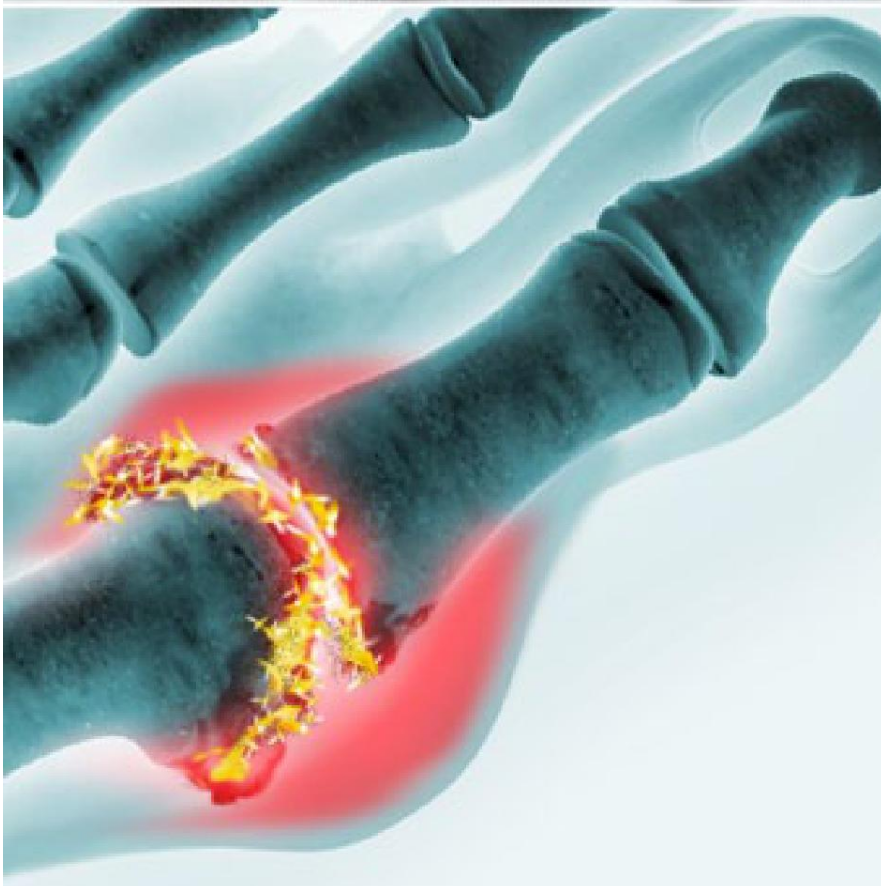




Gout



Overview

This is a form of arthritis. It causes pain and swelling in your joints. For many people, it starts in the big toe.

Causes

Gout is caused by too much uric acid in your body. This is a waste product that's made when you digest some foods and drinks. It's normally carried through your blood to your kidneys, and then it passes out in your urine. But if you have gout, your body can't get rid of uric acid fast enough. It builds up in your blood. It collects in your joints in the form of crystals. Your immune system responds to these crystals, causing gout symptoms to flare.

Symptoms

An attack of gout comes on suddenly, often at night. You may feel it in your feet, ankles and knees. It may affect your hands, wrists and elbows. Your joints become painful and swollen. The skin may be red and warm. Your joints may feel stiff. Your first attack may last from three to ten days. If you have another attack, it may be months or years later. As you have more attacks, more joints may be involved.

Treatment

Gout is treated with medications. Getting regular exercise and losing weight may also help. And, you may be able to reduce your risk for gout attacks by avoiding foods and drinks that can raise levels of uric acid in your body. Some examples include red meat, seafood, alcoholic beverages and drinks that contain fruit sugar. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that's right for you.