

To **STOP GOUT**  
you need to bring your  
uric acid levels down.



# Why do I get gout?

You might think that gout is caused by drinking too much beer and fizzy drinks and eating too much meat and shellfish. In fact, gout is caused by having too much of a chemical called uric acid in your blood.

Your body makes uric acid when you eat food. It is normal and healthy to have some uric acid in your body. Most people get rid of uric acid through their urine.

However, if you eat food, such as meat, seafood, beer, fizzy drinks and orange juice, your body can make too much uric acid.

# How does gout affect you?

Gout can be a sign you could get diabetes, heart disease and kidney problems.

Gout can be very painful and can stop you doing all the things you enjoy. Gout can stop you playing sport and spending time with your family or whānau.

Gout can stop you feeling good about yourself and your life.

# What causes your gout attacks?

If there is too much uric acid in your blood, the acid turns into crystals in your joints especially your toes, knees, elbows, wrists and fingers.

The crystals are very sharp, like needles, and your joint gets very sore and painful. This is called a gout attack.

Crystals can cause damage to your joints.

The crystals cause lumps which are called tophi (you say toe-fy). If tophi get too big they can make it hard for you to wear shoes, use a knife and fork, write and walk easily.



Image supplied by PHARMAC

# What causes high uric acid in your body?

**80%**

of high uric acid is caused by your body not getting rid of uric acid properly.

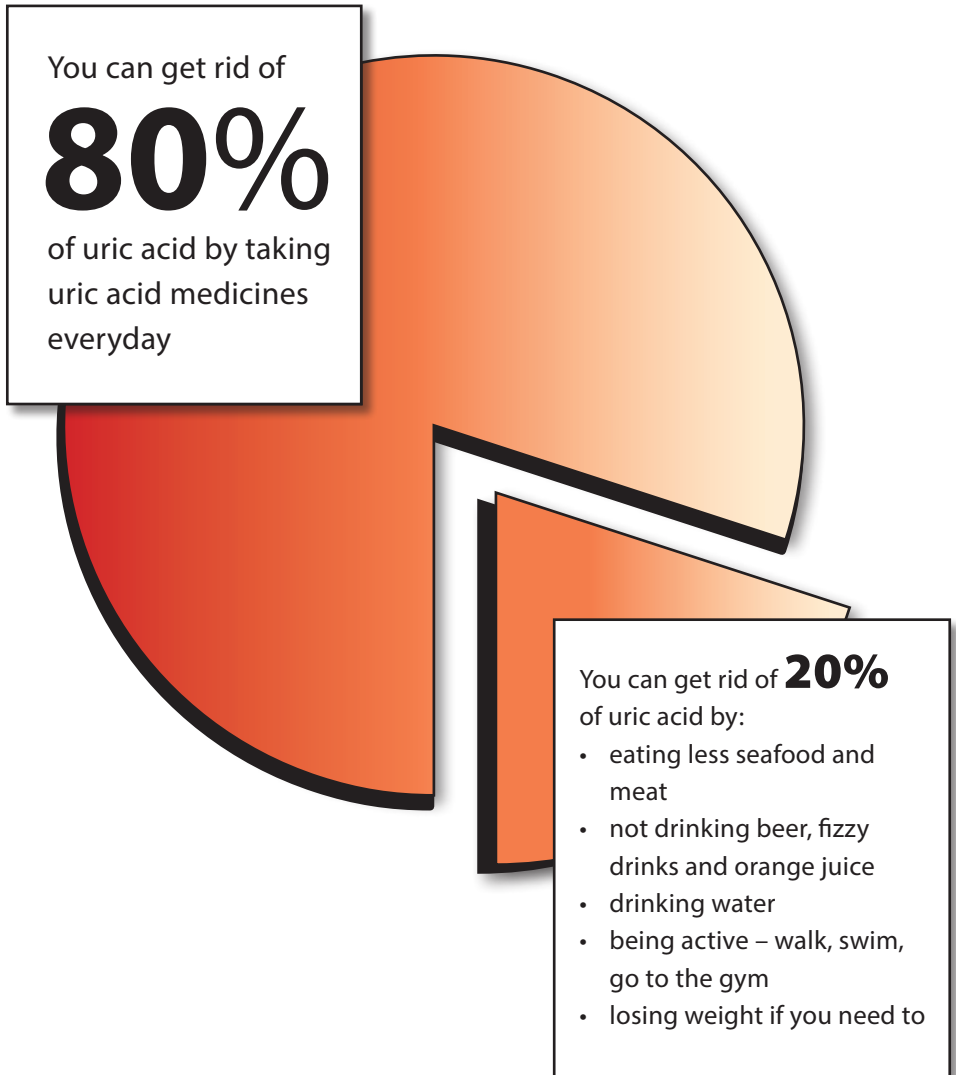
This could be because of:

- your genes
- your weight
- kidney problems

**20%**

of high uric acid is caused by what you eat and drink

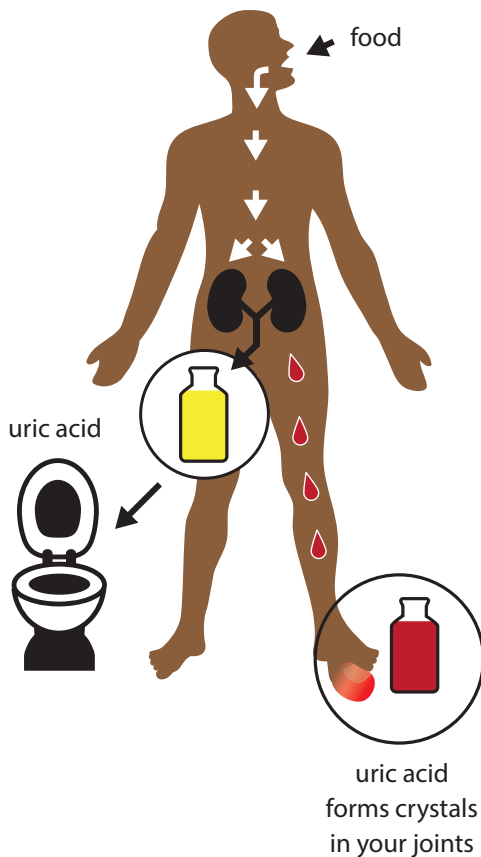
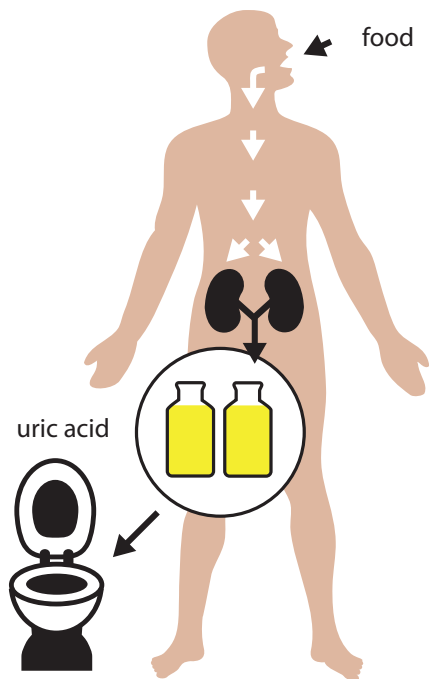
# How can you get rid of uric acid in your body?



# How you get rid of uric acid

Most people get rid of uric acid through their urine

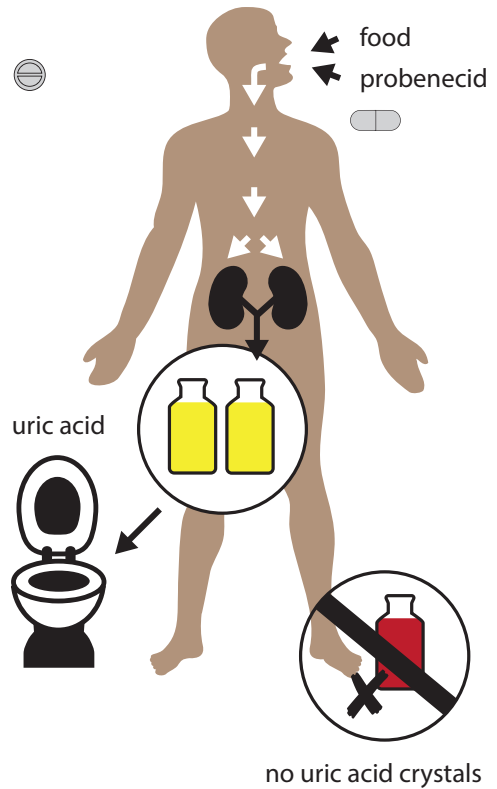
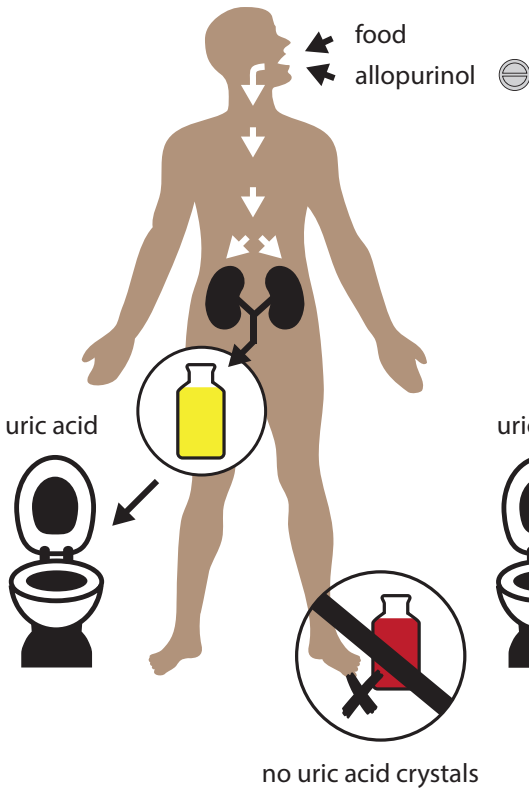
Some people, including many Māori and Pacific people, get rid of some of their uric acid, and the rest stays in their blood



# How uric acid medicines help you

**Some uric acid medicines stop your body making too much uric acid**

**Some uric acid medicines help your body get rid of uric acid through your urine**



# Medicines for gout

**There are two types of medicines for gout:**

## 1. Uric acid medicine

*Uric acid medicines bring your uric acid levels down. You need to take them every day.*



Common uric acid medicines are allopurinol and probenecid.

You need to take uric acid medicine every day, even if you are having a gout attack. When you start taking uric acid medicines, you might get a gout attack. So make sure your doctor also gives you medicine to treat the pain from a gout attack.

### **Side effects**

Make sure you ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist what the side effects of uric acid medicine could be and what you should do if you get side effects.

## 2. Gout attack medicines

*Gout attack medicines treat gout attacks. You take these medicines when you feel a gout attack coming on or if you are in pain.*

Common gout attack medicines are colchicine, prednisone, naproxen, diclofenac (Voltaren®) and ibuprofen.

Gout attack medicines only treat pain and swelling. Gout attack medicines do not stop gout because they do not bring your uric acid levels down.

### **Side effects**

Most gout attack medicines should not be taken for a long time. People with tophi may need to take colchicine for a long time.

Taking gout attack medicines all the time can cause side effects such as stomach problems.

*Always ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist how long you should take your gout attack medicine for.*



# Starting on uric acid medicine

**Your doctor should start you on a low dose and slowly build up to a stronger dose. When you start on uric acid medicine you also need to take gout attack medicine. You will be taking two medicines.**

## 1st medicine

Your uric acid medicine is called \_\_\_\_\_

You take:

\_\_\_\_\_ mg a day for \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ mg a day for \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ mg a day for \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ mg a day for \_\_\_\_\_

*Remember, keep taking your uric acid medicine every day even if you get an attack. Tell your doctor or nurse if you get an attack. Stop taking uric acid medicine immediately if you get a bad skin rash. Tell your doctor or nurse immediately if you get a bad skin rash.*

Take your uric acid medicine every day even if you get a gout attack.

## 2nd medicine

Your gout attack medicine is \_\_\_\_\_

You take:

\_\_\_\_\_ mg a day for \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ mg a day for \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ mg a day for \_\_\_\_\_

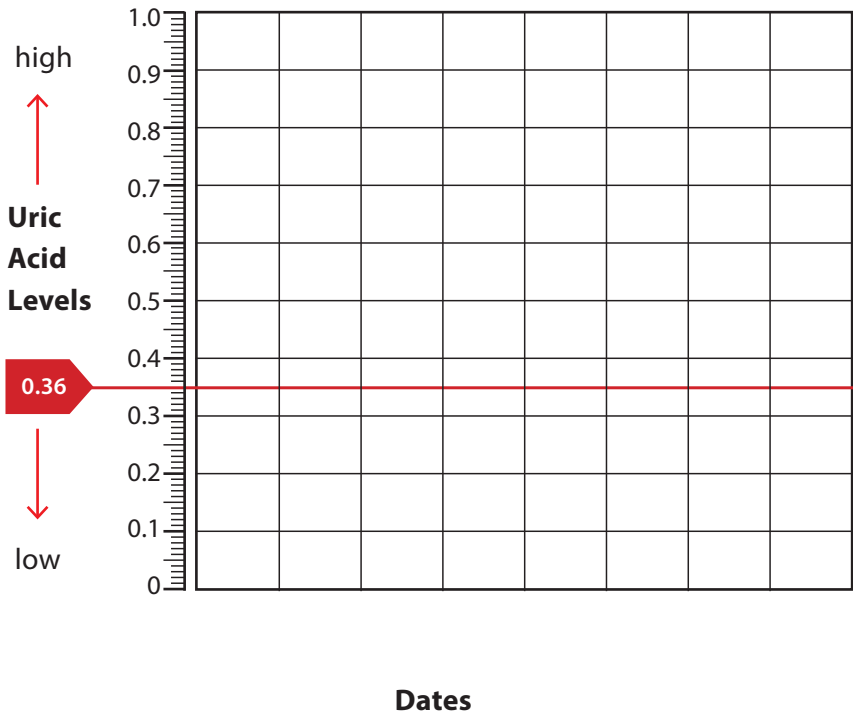
\_\_\_\_\_ mg a day for \_\_\_\_\_

*Remember, you shouldn't take most gout attack medicines for a long time as they can cause stomach problems.*

# Checking your uric acid level

When you take uric acid medicine your target is to get your uric acid levels down to 0.36. You need to get your uric acid level checked regularly. You might need to take a stronger dose of your uric acid medicine if your levels don't come down. If you have tophi you might need to get your uric acid levels down to 0.30 to get rid of your tophi.

**Fill in your uric acid levels on this graph**



# Choosing the right shoe

If you get gout in your foot, try not to wear:



sandals



jandals



slippers



old shoes

These shoes don't support your feet properly when you are walking or standing. This can affect your balance and make your pain worse.

People with gout in their feet need to wear shoes that:

1. are comfortable (not too tight), so there is room if your foot swells up
2. have a wide toe to leave room for your sore toe
3. have laces or velcro so you can tighten or loosen your shoe
4. have a cushioned insole that supports your foot
5. have a deep heel so your foot fits into your shoe properly
6. have a small heel because high heels can cause problems with your feet, knees and legs
7. have a firm sole that is not worn.



You need to buy a good quality shoe but your shoes don't have to be expensive.

If you are not sure about what shoes to buy, take this list with you and talk to the salesperson in the shop.

**Ask**

# your doctor, nurse or pharmacist

*What is my uric acid level?*

*When do I need to get my uric acid level checked again?*

*What are the possible side effects from this new medicine?*

*What else can I do to bring my uric acid levels down?*

*When do I need to call you if I have any side effects?*

*This medicine doesn't seem to be working for me – I am still getting gout attacks and my uric acid level isn't going down. Can you talk to a rheumatologist or specialist nurse and ask them what else we can do?*

*Should I stop taking this medicine if I get side effects?*

*Do I need to get my heart and diabetes checked as well?*

*Do I need to take more uric acid medicine to get my uric acid level down?*

*What can I say to my family so they don't get gout?*

## Want to know more about gout:

### Health Navigator:

[www.healthnavigator.org.nz/  
health-topics/gout/](http://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-topics/gout/)

**Arthritis NZ:** Phone: 0800 66 34 63

(freephone for cell phones and landlines)  
[www.arthritis.org.nz](http://www.arthritis.org.nz)

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Your question