



## **GOUT & URIC ACID**

EDUCATION SOCIETY<sup>SM</sup>

### **About Gout**

#### *What You Need to Know About Gout and Uric Acid*

##### **What is Gout?**

Gout is caused by an accumulation of sodium urate crystals in the joints. These crystals form when there is an abnormally high level of uric acid (urate) in the body.

##### **What is Uric Acid?**

Uric acid is naturally present in small amounts in the body. It is a normal waste product that results from the breakdown of purines found in cells or absorbed in food.

##### **Uric Acid and Hyperuricemia**

Normally, uric acid dissolves in the blood and passes through the kidneys into the urine. When more uric acid is produced than the kidneys can eliminate, the serum uric acid level increases. This elevated level is known as hyperuricemia. When the uric acid level increases to 6.8 mg/dL it begins to crystallize in joints.

##### **Quick Facts About Gout**

- More than 2 million Americans suffer with gout today.
- Gout is the most common form of arthritis in men over age 40. Women typically do not suffer from gout until after menopause.
- Gout is one of the most painful types of arthritis, with a pain level described by patients as equivalent to childbirth or the fracture of long bones.
- Approximately 60% of patients will experience a second gout attack within the first year of their initial attack.
- For someone with hyperuricemia (elevated uric acid levels), trauma, surgery or excessive consumption of purine-rich foods or alcohol can tip the balance, setting a cascade in motion within the body that triggers a painful attack of gout.
- An obese person is four times as likely to develop gout than someone with a normal body weight.
- For most patients, medications are the most effective way to fight gout. Even strict adherence to a low purine diet will reduce uric acid levels by only 1.0 mg/dL. For most people with gout or hyperuricemia, diet alone is not enough to maintain a uric acid level below 6.0 mg/dL, which most experts agree is the level necessary to prevent the consequences of hyperuricemia and gout.\*
- People with gout are at higher risk for cardiac problems, including high blood pressure, coronary artery disease and congestive heart failure. However, it is not known if gout or hyperuricemia contribute to heart disease. Studies are underway to determine if uric acid has a direct role in causing these disorders.

\*It is important for people with gout to work with their physician to find the right medication so that they can effectively manage their gout.