



The Beacon

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Med-Cert Medical Management Resources

“Guiding your way to better health management”

What Is Gout?

Without warning and, for some reason, in the middle of the night, gout strikes -- an intense pain in a joint, most often the big toe, but sometimes other joints, including knees, ankles, elbows, thumbs, or fingers.

Attacks of gout can be unexpected and excruciatingly painful. With prompt treatment, the pain and inflammation usually disappear after a few days, but they may recur at any time.

More than 2 million Americans suffer from gout. Gout occurs more often in men than in women. Men usually develop it between the ages of 30-50. Women are more prone to gout after menopause, and it is rare in children and young adults. Men who are overweight or suffering from high blood pressure are particularly prone to gout, especially if they are taking thiazide diuretics (water pills).

Gout is actually a form of arthritis. It is the body's reaction to irritating crystal deposits in the joints. The pain can be intense, but treatment usually works very well. Mild cases may be controlled by diet alone. Recurring attacks of gout may require long-term medication to prevent damage to bone and

cartilage and deterioration of the kidneys.

Chronic gout sufferers may feel tiny, hard lumps accumulating over time in the soft flesh of areas such as the hands, elbows, feet, or earlobes. These deposits, called tophi, are concentrations of uric acid crystals and can cause pain and stiffness over time. If similar deposits form in the kidneys, they can lead to painful and potentially dangerous kidney stones.

What Causes Gout?

An excess of uric acid in the blood brings on gout. Uric acid comes from two places -- produced by the body and from the diet. Any extra uric acid usually filters through the kidneys and gets passed in urine. If the body produces too much uric acid or fails to excrete it in the urine, crystals of sodium urate become concentrated in the joints and tendons. This causes swelling, pressure, and severe pain.

Nobody knows exactly why gout develops. The most common factor that increases your chance of gout and gout attacks is excess consumption of alcohol, mainly beer. It used to be known as "the disease of kings" since it was mainly seen in wealthy men who drank and ate too much. Now we know it can occur in

anyone and can be associated with an injury or surgical procedure, hospitalizations, periods of stress, or reactions to fatty meals and certain drugs such as antibiotics. Gout may also occur in the presence of some tumors or cancers. Research shows a relation between gout and kidney disorders, enzyme deficiencies, and lead poisoning. Gout may also accompany psoriasis or anemia and is common in patients with transplanted organs. Susceptibility to gout can be inherited and is often associated with other common illnesses such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity. Repeat attacks of gout are common if the body's uric acid level is not kept under control.

Pseudogout is a similar but generally less painful condition caused by calcium pyrophosphate crystals in the joints. While it can affect the large toe, it is more commonly seen in larger joints such as the knee, wrist, or ankle. More common after age 60 in both sexes, pseudogout is treated with anti-inflammatory agents or, in severe cases, surgery followed by cortisone injections.

Med-Cert News

The Med-Cert staff wishes you a
very Happy New Year!!!

Did you know??

Breathing generates about 0.6g of CO₂ every minute.



Ask A Nurse

Q: My muscles often ache after exercise. Are there any pain relievers that you recommend?

A: Delayed onset muscle soreness you feel a day or two after intense exercise, will clear up on its own in about 3 days. Until then, NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen sodium (Aleve), can help pain management.

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Q: Is there any good scientific evidence that shows hypnosis can help people lose weight?

A: Absolutely. A review of six studies published in the September 2005 issue of the *International Journal of Obesity* found convincing documentation of hypnotherapy's ability to aid weight loss; other small studies show that participants who undergo hypnotherapy can lose as much as 12 to 15 pounds.

January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month

More than 2.2 million Americans age 40 and older suffer from glaucoma. Contact Prevent Blindness America for more information.

1-800-331-2020 or go to:

<http://www.preventblindness.net>

DON'T FORGET TO PRECERTIFY

Med-Cert's Toll-free Precert Telephone Number is (800)-356-7126 and should be reflected on your health insurance ID cards.

It is ultimately the responsibility of the employee/participant/member to make sure precertification has been done. Many plans will reduce your benefit amount if you fail to precertify.

Group Health Plans vary from one employer to the next so it is important for you to know what your health plan requires. Call the customer service representative for your health plan if you have questions.

Below is a list of some of the common Standard Precertification Notification Requirements.

- *Inpatient Hospital Stays*
- *Inpatient Treatment for Mental and Emotional Conditions or Substance Abuse*
- *Inpatient Rehabilitation Therapy*
- *Skilled Nursing Care*
- *Outpatient Stays over 12 hours*
- *Outpatient Surgeries*
- *Physical Therapy after first 6 visits*
- *Speech Therapy after first 6 visits*
- *Home Health Care*
- *Hospice Care*
- *Maternity – on confirmation of pregnancy (or at least 2 months prior to delivery) and again on admission for delivery*
- *Outpatient Procedures – refer to your Employee Benefit Plan booklet as some plans require precertification for outpatient procedures*

Med-Cert provides:

Utilization Management, Maternity Management, Large Case and Wellness Disease Management, Transplant Coordination and Stop Loss Assessments

For information on any of our services, please call

866-261-5657 (toll free). We are on the

Internet. Visit us at:

www.medcertinc.com

Recipe Corner



Mexican Rice and Bean Bake

Ingredients

- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ - cups water
- 1 - cup uncooked instant brown rice
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ - cups picante sauce
- 1 - cup shredded reduced-fat Cheddar cheese (4 ounces)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ - cup fat-free cholesterol-free egg product or 1 egg
- 1 - can (15 to 16 ounces) pinto beans, drained
- $\frac{1}{4}$ - teaspoon chili powder

Directions

1. Heat water to boiling in 1-quart saucepan. Stir in rice; reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer 10 minutes. Meanwhile, heat oven to 350°. Spray square baking dish, 8x8x2 inches, with cooking spray.
2. Mix rice, 1/2 cup of the picante sauce, 1/2 cup of the cheese, and the egg product in medium bowl; press in bottom of baking dish.
3. Mix beans and remaining 1 cup picante sauce in small bowl; spoon over rice mixture. Sprinkle with remaining 1/2 cup cheese and the chili powder.
4. Bake uncovered 30 to 35 minutes or until cheese is melted and bubbly. Let stand 5 minutes before serving.



This newsletter is brought to you courtesy of Med-Cert, Inc. Our sources for this edition are Web MD and Prevention magazine.