

# YOUR GOUT QUESTIONS ANSWERED

## Gout & Kidney Disease



Perspective from **PAYAM SHAKOURI, MD**

### How are kidney disease and gout related?

The kidneys filter and remove uric acid from the body. If your kidneys don't filter out enough uric acid, the body retains more than it should. The excess uric acid can build up over time and cause gout.

Having impaired kidney function – kidney disease – increases one's risk for developing gout. And having gout can exacerbate one's kidney disease.

### What causes kidney disease?

Kidney disease is the loss of kidney function. There are many causes of kidney disease, including infections and chronic diseases such as gout. Early-stage kidney disease is almost always a "silent disease," causing no pain but mostly nonspecific symptoms such as fatigue or increased blood pressure.

The kidneys are resilient organs. They recover well from acute injury caused by dehydration or a gout attack. But over time, ongoing damage – such as long-term uncontrolled gout – may lead to irreversible chronic kidney disease.

Experiencing a gout attack could be a sign of kidney disease. You should talk to your physician about checking your uric acid level and testing your kidney function.

### How can someone with gout reduce his or her risk of kidney disease?

Lowering your uric acid level may slow the progression of kidney damage. For years, we didn't have great treatments for gout. But now, I encourage my patients to use an oral or infused medication to help rid the body of excess uric acid.

I use this example to describe how uric acid "holds on" to joints. Imagine stepping in thick mud. When it dries on your shoes, it's caked on and hard to chip away. But running hot water over it softens the mud and allows it to easily wash away. The infused treatment can have a similar effect on uric acid, even if it's been building up for years.

### Why isn't gout discussed more as a risk factor for other diseases?

There's historically been a lack of data about gout's effect on kidney disease, heart disease, and other conditions, too. We've allowed a lack of information to be filled by silence, but it's dangerous to leave these comorbid conditions unaddressed. They can all be managed, if caught early.

Gout is a systemic disease that affects your entire body, not just your joints. As health care providers, we need to remember this and help our patients address their gout for the sake of overall health.