

YOUR GOUT QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Treating Gout: A Podiatrist's Perspective



Perspective from **SCOTT M. NEVILLE, DPM**

What advice would you give other podiatrists on treating gout?

Before I became a gout specialist, I thought I already knew everything there was to know about gout. I quickly learned that gout is complex, and I had to educate myself on the depths of the disease.

My advice for other podiatrists is to always be eager to learn more about gout and the available treatment options. As physicians, we should focus on giving our patients the best possible care. That means continuously learning more about the disease so we can properly manage it.

How would you advise gout patients about being referred to a podiatrist?

If you have a repetitive problem that isn't being addressed, it's time to look for a second opinion. Especially when it comes to pain in the feet and toes, podiatrists are well suited to give that second opinion. If a patient is ready to seek care from a specialist, it's as simple as politely explaining your condition to your primary care doctor.

Patients often feel anxious about asking for a referral, but there's no need to worry. Especially for gout patients, the process for getting proper treatment can be long and hard. Patients can get discouraged when they're not receiving proper care and will live in pain for years before they take matters into their own hands. Don't let it go that far. Primary care doctors are often more than happy to refer their patients to an outside specialist. It's always a good idea to get a second or even a third opinion.

Why should gout patients see a podiatrist?

Gout often presents itself in the foot. If someone is having repetitive foot pain, it would be helpful for them to see a foot specialist. Most podiatrists will take gout seriously and will see patients quickly. When patients visit a podiatrist for their gout, they can feel confident in the specialized care they are receiving.

Gout is an incredibly manageable disease as long as patients seek help and get adequate treatment.

What needs to change with gout treatment?

I would like providers to take hyperuricemia more seriously. High uric acid levels are the number one indicator for gout, yet it may take a while before a patient's uric acid level is tested. It's easy to acknowledge the physical symptoms of gout. If a patient cannot walk due to foot pain, most physicians will take that seriously. But rarely do they consider checking a patient's uric acid level if they come in with foot pain.

It is not uncommon for gout to be misdiagnosed, which causes patients to live in pain for years before receiving a proper diagnosis. I would even encourage patients to advocate for a uric acid test if they believe they may have gout. Blood tests to check uric acid levels are simple and inexpensive. If both physicians and patients understood more about hyperuricemia, they could catch gout early. And the best way to limit gout attacks is to get uric acid levels under control.