

## When Gout Goes Untreated

*What Happens When Gout is Allowed to Progress?*

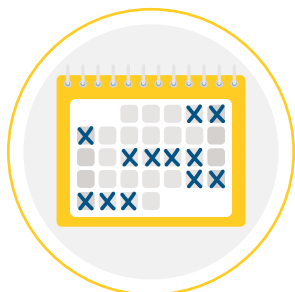
Prioritizing one's health can be a challenge. But for people with gout – a debilitating form of inflammatory arthritis that affects more than 12 million Americans – delaying visits with a health care provider or downplaying symptoms can have serious consequences.

Gout occurs due to a buildup of uric acid in the body. When gout goes untreated, several things can happen.



### **Uric acid crystals build up.**

Excess uric acid accumulates and can form deposits around the joints known as tophi. These are most likely to develop in people with chronic, uncontrolled gout.



### **Gout attacks become worse and more frequent.**

Flares happen when uric acid crystals attack one or more joints in the body, causing painful, red and swollen joints. Acute gout attacks can last anywhere from a few hours to a few days. They can occur a couple of times a year or, if gout is left untreated, can last longer and become more frequent.



### **Joint damage occurs.**

If gout goes untreated, uric acid crystals will compound under the skin and in the affected joint. Tophi can eat away at the bone, limit movement, compress nerves and cause discomfort – even leading to permanent disability.



### **Surgery may become necessary.**

Some patients may need to have their tophi surgically removed. Tophi will, however, come back if the patient does not also manage uric acid levels with urate-lowering medication.

The best way to avoid disease progression and tophi is to proactively manage gout from the outset.

A gout specialist may recommend medication to lower uric acid levels or prescribe new biologic medication that removes uric acid crystals from the body and dissolves tophi more quickly.

**Whatever the treatment regimen, working with a gout specialist to achieve long-term gout management is crucial to staying healthy and flare free.**



The Alliance for Gout Awareness works to reduce stigma and empower patients by improving public understanding of gout.