



ALLIANCE FOR Gout Awareness

FEBRUARY 2019

National Survey of Patients' Attitudes Toward Gout

Shame, confusion and lack of awareness may keep people with gout from receiving the treatment they need, a national poll of 169 gout patients suggests. The disease, a form of arthritis, afflicts more than 9 million Americans with painful attacks that come on suddenly.¹

Despite the disease's severity, respondents reported feeling stigmatized, agreeing that:

- Others look down on those with gout
- People with gout are embarrassed to discuss their disease.

Responses also revealed concerning trends in gout treatment:

- A majority of respondents reported that it's hard to get proper treatment for gout
- One in four inaccurately believes that at-home elixirs such as cherry juice and apple cider vinegar can eliminate gout
- More than one-fourth mistakenly believe that the chronic disease can be cured.

To ensure that gout patients get a proper diagnosis, appropriate treatment and the community of support they need, education efforts for both gout patients and the public must continue to expand.

Key Findings

Stigma

Nearly all respondents (97%) acknowledged gout as a serious disease. And almost as many (90%) realize that, left untreated, gout can lead to other serious health problems, such as kidney stones² and cardiovascular disease.³

But that knowledge doesn't protect them from the feelings of shame and stigma that plague patients with gout.

Respondents acknowledged that embarrassment keeps many patients silent about their gout, perhaps due to public perceptions of the disease.

Notably, 93 percent of respondents agreed with the statement "Many people don't know that gout is a form of arthritis." Lack of public knowledge about the disease may contribute to the stigma that patients experience.



Respondents Agree:

52%

People with gout are **often too embarrassed** to talk about the disease.

41%

People look down on those with gout.

93%

Many people don't know that gout is **a form of arthritis**.

Self Blame

Meanwhile, patients may be overemphasizing their own role in developing gout. Roughly half attribute their gout to eating too much unhealthy food and drinking alcohol in excess. While some foods can increase one's risk, blaming one's behavior may lead to gout patients' not talking openly with others or—worse—not seeking treatment. Some people are simply predisposed to gout, including those with a family history.⁴

Gout is caused by eating too much **unhealthy food & drinking alcohol** in excess.



46%

Treatment & Myths

If patients blame themselves for their gout, they may also be likely to try and “fix” the disease themselves. Nearly one in four patients believes natural remedies like apple cider vinegar or cherry juice can treat the disease.



Respondents Reported

People can effectively address gout with natural remedies such as:

7%

Apple cider vinegar.

11%

Cherry juice.

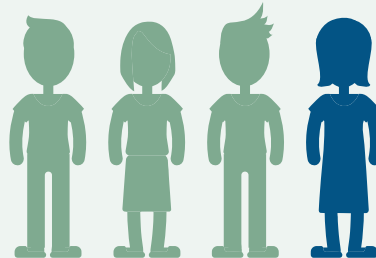
7%

Other natural remedies.

75%

Natural remedies aren't sufficient to treat gout.

1 in 4 Patients
Mistakenly Look to
Natural Remedies



Rather than suffering in silence or hoping for relief from an at-home remedy, people with gout should seek treatment. It's not always easy. Nearly three quarters of respondents agree that it's hard to get proper treatment for gout, perhaps because they don't recognize the signs of the disease or because stigma deters them from acting on it.

Patients should seek treatment from a gout specialist, typically a rheumatologist.⁵ Fifty-four percent of patients recognized this fact.



Respondents Agree:

73%

It's hard to get proper treatment for gout.

"Curing" vs. Managing Gout

Gout is a chronic condition, meaning it can never be cured.⁵ Losing weight, limiting high-purine foods and following a personalized treatment plan can help patients manage their gout and reduce painful attacks,⁴ but patients should not labor under the misunderstanding that they can cure themselves of the disease.

Nevertheless, survey responses revealed that about one-fourth of patients do believe that certain measures can eliminate the disease.



Respondents Reported

You can cure gout by:

2%

Changing your diet and losing weight.

2%

Exercising, changing your diet and losing weight.

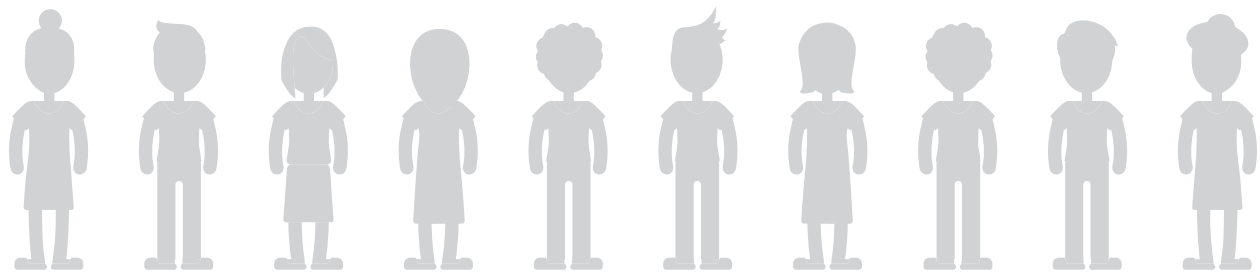
23%

Exercising, changing your diet, losing weight and taking uric acid-lowering medication.

73%

Gout can be controlled but never cured.

Survey Demographic Breakdown



Male (43%)
Female (57%)

21-35 (6%)
36-49 (21%)
50-64 (29%)
65+ (44%)

Northeast (24%)
Midwest (23%)
South (37%)
West (16%)

References

1. Arthritis Foundation. (n.d.). What is gout? Retrieved January 18, 2019 from <https://www.arthritis.org/about-arthritis/types/gout/what-is-gout.php>
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3. American Heart Association. (2018, August 17). Gout could increase risk of heart disease. Retrieved January 28, 2019 from <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2018/08/17/gout-could-increase-heart-disease-risk>
4. National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases. (2016). Gout. Retrieved January 18, 2019 from <https://www.niams.nih.gov/health-topics/gout>
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ALLIANCE FOR Gout Awareness

The Alliance for Gout Awareness works to reduce stigma and empower patients by improving public understanding of gout. Members collaborate on educational materials and support resources. By heightening public awareness and addressing common misconceptions, the Alliance for Gout Awareness emboldens patients to acknowledge the disease's impact and to seek the treatment they need.



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