

Patient Patient

With **GERALD HAYASHI**
Alliance for Gout Awareness Advocate



How did you first learn that you had gout?

In the beginning, my symptoms were fairly mild. They'd last a couple days, then go away, and I'd forget until it happened again. Then it got so bad I couldn't walk.

I went to a primary care doctor, who diagnosed me with gout. He prescribed a medication that seemed to help, and I began having just one or two gout attacks a year. Most weren't too bad. I thought I could put it all behind me.

Then a few years later it really started to hit. Especially on my right thumb, the joint got really large and hard to move, making it difficult to move my hand. I knew I needed a different approach.

How did seeing a gout specialist make a difference for you?

I was referred to a rheumatologist who said, "You have uric acid build-up in your joints." I don't think I'd ever had a real explanation of gout before that.

He walked through a few treatment options with me. He explained that drugs like allopurinol or colchicine were widely used and often very effective. But for me he suggested pegloticase, which can help people who have really struggled to get the disease under control.

Now, the uric acid build-up has shrunk and my joints are less swollen—

especially the thumb on my right hand, which had given me problems before. That's almost completely back down to normal.

What's it like managing both gout and diabetes?

Diabetes adds another layer to things, of course. I've had no interaction with medications, so that's good. But it's forced me to be extra careful about what I eat and drink.

For instance, before I knew I had gout, I was drinking diet beverages a lot. I was avoiding all the sugar in regular sodas, which was good for managing diabetes. But then my rheumatologist explained that artificial sweeteners can cause a problem with uric acid. So now I take that into account. I think it's important more people recognize that diabetes and gout often occur together.

Do you see a connection between gout and genetics?

Yes, my sister and brother have both dealt with gout. My family is Asian, which I now know makes our likelihood of having gout higher.

I'm grateful that my family understands what living with gout is like and is supportive.

What advice would you offer a person who's newly diagnosed with gout?

Don't feel overwhelmed. Life is just a series of adjustments, really. So I look at gout management as something that just has to be done. Maybe you have to give up something you're used to, or take a medicine you didn't expect to, but you find workarounds.

Gout varies from person to person. But you find what works for you, and you do it.

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