

What is a low-purine diet?

A low-purine diet is an eating plan that limits foods that contain purine. Purines are a natural substance found in some foods. When your body digests purine, a waste product called uric (say: “yur-ick”) acid is produced. A buildup of uric acid crystals in the joints can cause a type of arthritis known as gout.

Purines are found in many healthy foods. The purpose of a low-purine diet is not to completely avoid purines. Instead, the goals are to limit and monitor how much purine is in the food you eat, and to learn how your body responds when you eat different foods that contain purine.

Who should follow a low-purine diet?

Your family doctor may recommend that you follow a low-purine diet if you have [gout](#) or another condition caused by high levels of uric acid (also called hyperuricemia). Following a low-purine diet may help reduce symptoms such as pain, redness and tenderness in your joints.

Our understanding of the role that eating habits play in conditions such as gout is becoming more clear as researchers learn more about these diseases. Keep in mind that dietary changes alone usually do not completely relieve gout symptoms. Talk with your family doctor about the benefit of dietary changes. If your family doctor has prescribed medicine for your gout, keep taking it until your doctor tells you to stop.

How do I get started?

Start by learning which of the foods that you eat are high in purine. Try to avoid eating high-purine foods and limit the amount of moderate-purine foods you eat. See the chart below for some suggestions.

Avoid	Limit	Enjoy
Beer	Chicken, beef, pork and duck	At least 12 cups of fluid, such as water or fruit juice
Soft drinks that contain sugar	Crab, lobster, oysters and shrimp	Low-fat and fat-free dairy products, such as cheese and yogurt
Fatty food	Lunch meats, especially high-fat versions	Eggs (in moderation)
Organ meats, such as liver, from any animal source	Liquor	Peanut butter and nuts
Bacon, veal and venison		Rice, noodles, pasta and potatoes
Yeast		Fruits
Anchovies, sardines, herring, mussels,		Vegetables

codfish, scallops, trout and haddock		
Gravy		Wine (in moderation)
		Coffee (in moderation)

Different people's bodies react differently to different foods. You will probably learn over time what foods do or do not affect you. If you discover that a food tends to cause your gout to flare up, avoid eating that food. Likewise, you can more freely enjoy foods that do not cause problems.

Losing weight can also help reduce symptoms of gout. However, it's important not to lose weight too quickly. Fasting and rapid weight-loss diets can actually increase the amount of uric acid in your body. Also avoid low-carbohydrate diets that are high in protein and fat because foods that are high in protein and fat usually contain significant amounts of purine.