

In This Issue

Holiday Feasts Can Trigger Gout Attacks

Ice-Related Falls

Feet Safety at the Gym

5 Tips for Healthy Feet

Don't Invite Gout to Your Holiday Feasts

With the holiday season upon us, be aware that sudden changes in your diet can trigger painful gout attacks, especially in your feet.

Gout attacks are caused by the accumulation and crystallization of uric acid in joint tissues. The big toe is most often affected by this painful condition because it is the coolest part of the body and uric acid is sensitive to temperature change. The hallmark for a gouty attack is a red, swollen and extremely painful toe to the touch that normally presents in the early morning hours.

Foods high in purines contribute to uric acid buildup. These include shellfish (shrimp, crab, etc.), organ meats (kidney, liver, etc.), red meat, red wine and beer.

Gout can be treated with medications, diet changes and increasing consumption of water (approximately six to eight glasses a day).

If you are suffering from pain in your feet or big toe this holiday season, contact your local foot and ankle surgeon to schedule an exam. To find one near you, visit FootHealthFacts.org.



Ice-Related Falls Can Wreak Havoc on Ankles



Serious injuries from ice-related falls often occur during the hectic holiday season. Falls on icy surfaces are a major cause of ankle sprains and fractures, and it is critical to seek prompt treatment to prevent further damage that can prolong recovery.

The ankle joint is vulnerable to serious injury from hard falls on ice. Ice accelerates the fall and often causes more severe trauma because the foot can go in any direction after slipping.

Even though ankle sprains and fractures can have similar symptoms, such as pain or soreness, swelling, bruising or difficulty walking, fractures are associated with:

- Pain at the fracture site that can extend from the foot to the knee
- Blisters over the fracture site
- Bone protruding through the skin

Many ankle fractures and sprains are treated by immobilizing the joint in a cast or splint to foster healing. However, surgery may be needed to repair fractures or severe ligament tears to allow them to heal properly with appropriate alignment.

In cases of less severe fractures and sprains, it is possible to walk and mistakenly believe the injury does not require medical treatment. It is also possible to fracture and sprain an ankle at the same time, and a bad sprain can mask a fracture. Putting weight on the injured ankle can worsen the problem and can lead to chronic instability, joint pain and arthritis over time.

If you injure your ankle or foot this winter, see a foot and ankle surgeon as soon as possible for evaluation, diagnosis and treatment. To find one near you, visit FootHealthFacts.org.

Keep Your Feet Safe at the Gym in the New Year



In the New Year, be sure to keep your feet in tip-top shape while following through with your resolutions to get fit.

Start new workouts gradually. Increase your stamina and the length of your workouts slowly to avoid overuse injuries, such as stress fractures or tendon strains and sprains. Stretching your muscles before and after workouts also helps prevent these types of injuries.

Wear the right shoes and socks. Wear well-fitting athletic shoes designed for the exercise or sport. Shoes that do not support the arch of the foot and provide cushioning for the heel can cause

heel pain (plantar fasciitis). Shoes that are too small can cause a neuroma (thickening/inflammation of the nerve) or toenail injuries and may require injections, medication or physical therapy. Wearing wicking-type socks can also help prevent painful blisters, which can become infected and can cause more serious issues.

Use good technique. Improper exercise techniques can result in injury to the tendons or ligaments in your feet and ankles. Incorrect posture or misuse of exercise equipment can cause decreased stabilization in the foot and ankle, leading to joint sprains and muscle strains.

Protect yourself from bacteria. Sweaty shoes, public showers, exercise equipment and the pool deck at the gym are breeding grounds for fungus, viruses and bacteria. Never go barefoot while in public areas—wear water shoes to protect your feet from wet surfaces and cover any cuts or cracks in your skin, as well as ingrown toenails, since minor tears in the skin's surface can act as entry points for bacteria.

If your feet or ankles hurt while exercising or if you suffer a foot or ankle injury, contact a foot and ankle surgeon as soon as possible to schedule an appointment. Visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org) to locate a foot and ankle surgeon in your area.

Five Tips for Healthy Holiday Feet

Sore, achy feet should not ruin your holiday season. Follow these five quick tips to keep your feet and ankles safe and healthy:

1. If the shoe fits, wear it. When hitting the dance floor or the shopping malls during the holiday season, do not compromise comfort and safety when picking the right shoes to wear. Narrow shoes, overly high-heeled ones or shoes that are not worn very often, such as dress shoes, can irritate feet and lead to blisters, calluses, swelling and even severe ankle injuries. Choose a shoe that has a low heel and fits your foot in length, width and depth while you are standing.

2. Avoid overindulging in holiday cheer. Certain foods and beverages high in purines, such as shellfish, red meat, red wine and beer, can trigger painful gout attacks, a condition in which uric acid builds up and crystallizes in and around joints, particularly in the big toe.

3. Be pedicure-safety conscious. Before you head out for your holiday pedicure, remember that nail salons can be a breeding ground for bacteria. Reduce your risk of infection by choosing a salon that follows proper sanitation practices and is licensed by the state. Also consider purchasing your own pedicure instruments to bring along to your appointment.

4. Watch for ice and snow. Holiday winter wonderlands can be beautiful but also dangerous. Use caution when traveling outdoors

and watch for ice or snow patches along your trail. If you experience a fall, take a break from activities until you can see a foot and ankle surgeon. Use RICE therapy (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation) to help reduce the pain and control swelling around the injury.

5. Listen to your feet. Foot pain and holiday fun do not mix. Inspect your feet regularly for any evidence of ingrown toenails, bruising, swelling, blisters, dry skin or calluses.

If you notice any pain, swelling or signs of problems, make an appointment with a foot and ankle surgeon. If you need one, visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org) to find one close to you.

