Gout prevention diet: These foods may ward off extreme pain and peeling skin

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GOUT is a common form of arthritis, affecting one in 40 people in the UK. But changing your diet could protect you.

The condition causes [extreme pain](http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/785273/what-is-gout-symptoms-toe-treatment-diet-arthritis) and swelling of the joints.

It’s most common in men over 40, and is triggered by excess uric acid in the blood, leading to crystals collecting around the joints.

However, according to new research, shunning a typical ‘Western’ diet can help lower your risk of developing it.

The study, published in The British Medical Journal, found those who ate lots of [fruit](http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/750912/gout-symptoms-feet-arthritis-diet-alcohol), vegetables, nuts and whole grains were less likely to suffer.

**The DASH diet has been found to lower uric acid levels in the blood, and may therefore reduce risk of gout.**

On the other hand, consuming lots of salt, sugary drinks, red and processed meats may lead to it.

Researchers investigated whether the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, in particular, could most effectively prevent it.

The eating regime is aimed at reducing blood pressure and preventing heart disease.

But it’s also been found to lower uric acid levels in the blood, and may therefore reduce risk of gout.

The food questionnaires of over 44,000 men aged 40 to 75 years with no history of gout were analysed over a 26-year period.

Participants with a higher DASH score - meaning they ate lots of fruits, vegetables, nuts and legumes, such as peas, beans and lentils, low-fat dairy products and whole grains, and less salt, sweetened beverages, and red and processed meats - had a lower risk of gout.

Those who stuck to a ‘Western’ diet - which included a higher intake of red and processed meats, fries, refined grains, sweets and desserts - were at a higher risk.

These findings were independent of known risk factors for gout, such as age, body mass index, high blood pressure, alcohol and coffee intake.

The study authors said the DASH diet “may provide an attractive preventive dietary approach for the risk of gout” since it also treats high blood pressure which affects the majority of gout sufferers.

High levels of uric acid in the blood stream cab be caused by crash dieting, foods rich in uric acid, stress, prolonged illness and injury, according to the UK Gout Society.

Sometimes people develop gout because they have an inherited abnormality or disorder associated with increased production of cells in the body.

Symptoms of gout include extremely painful attacks in the joints of the foot, knee, ankle, hand and wrist that develops during the night or early hours of the morning.

It can also cause red and shiny skin that peels, a mild fever, loss of appetite and tiredness.