

# In Good Health



## What is Gout?

**Gout is a common form of arthritis that causes sudden, severe attacks of pain and swelling in some joints. The large joint of the big toe is most commonly affected but gout can also affect other joints including those in the knees, ankles, elbows, wrists and fingers.**

Gout occurs when too much of the waste product, uric acid, builds up in the bloodstream. High levels of uric acid can lead to the formation of urate crystals. When these crystals accumulate around a joint, they cause the inflammation and intense pain of a gout attack.

Gout mainly affects men between 40 and 50 years of age as they tend to have higher levels of uric acid. Women are less likely to be affected by gout but are more susceptible after menopause. Other factors that can increase the levels of uric acid in your body, and therefore the likelihood of you developing gout include:

- The use of certain medications such as low-dose aspirin and diuretics (water tablets).
- Excessive alcohol use – generally more than two drinks per day for men and one for women.

- Having a family history of gout.
- Having certain medical conditions or diseases including high blood pressure, and diabetes.

An attack of gout can last from 1-10 days before it dies down doing no permanent damage to the joint. It could be months or years before another attack occurs, however, if you get lots of attacks you could develop more permanent arthritis in the joint which could damage it (chronic gout).

Healthy lifestyle choices combined with a correct treatment program should lead to the successful management of gout. In the initial stages of an attack your doctor may prescribe anti-inflammatory medication to help control pain and swelling. Between attacks medication may be given to help reduce uric acid levels.

Maintaining a healthy weight, limiting your intake of alcohol, treating high blood pressure and exercising regularly are all important lifestyle changes that will give you long term benefits if you suffer from gout.



# Anterior Cruciate Ligament

The Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) is one of the four major ligaments of the knee. It prevents excessive motion of the knee joint and plays a vital role in knee stability. The ACL is the knee ligament most commonly injured.

A torn ACL or ACL injury is most often a sports-related injury. Most ACL injuries occur when pivoting, twisting or landing from a jump. They can also result from a direct blow to the knee as may occur during a rugby or football tackle. Female athletes are known to have a higher risk of injuring their ACL while participating in competitive sports, however, the exact reason for this is unknown.

## SYMPTOMS OF A TORN ACL

- A popping or cracking sound at the time of injury

- A feeling of instability/ knee “gives way”
- Knee swelling
- Moderate to severe pain
- Not having the full range of movement in the knee, in particular, not being able to straighten the leg.

## TREATMENT FOR A TORN ACL

Initial treatment for a torn ACL aims to reduce pain and swelling in the knee, regain normal joint movement and strengthen the muscles around the knee. Depending on how serious the injury is to the ACL, surgery may be necessary to restore stability to the knee and enable the person to return to sports.

Surgery involves reconstruction of the torn ACL by grafting (attaching) new tissue onto it. This encourages the new ligament to grow over the

grafted tissue. Once new ligament has grown, the knee should be more stable. Recovery usually takes around six months, although it could be up to a year before athletes can fully return to their sport.



## Protecting Your KNEES

You can help to prevent injuries to your knees if you:

- **Exercise regularly** – Maintaining a good level of fitness will mean your muscles are stronger and better able to support your knee joints.
- **Build up exercise programs slowly** – Start gently and gradually increase the intensity.
- **Warm up properly before exercise/playing sport** – Spend at least five to ten minutes warming up before exercise to increase blood flow to your muscles and reduce the chance of injury.
- **Stretch and strengthen** – It is important to keep the muscles around the knees in good condition. Work on the strength and flexibility of all the muscle groups in the leg.
- **Rest and Recover** - Allow adequate recovery time between workouts or training sessions.
- **Use proper techniques** – Use proper techniques when playing sport and working out. Avoid sudden jarring motions and try to turn on the balls of your feet when changing direction rather than twisting through your knees.
- **Wear appropriate footwear** – Proper footwear that is appropriate to the activity you are doing is very important. A good pair of shoes will help keep your knees stable, provide cushioning and support your knees and lower leg.
- **Keep your weight under control** – Maintaining a healthy body weight for your size reduces stress upon the knee joint.

# What is Pilates?

Pilates is a series of body conditioning exercises that have been practised since the early 1920s. Joseph Pilates, the founder of the technique, used his understanding of sports such as gymnastics and boxing, along with studies of yoga and Zen to create the Pilates system.

The technique is underpinned by eight principles; relaxation, concentration, co-ordination, alignment, breathing, flowing movements, centring and stamina. Its central aims are to improve posture, balance, and increase flexibility.

Pilates exercises are usually performed on a mat on the floor. The exercises use gravity and your own body weight to provide resistance. In particular, exercises work the abdominal muscles and pelvic floor, helping to create a centre of balance for the body, improving core-muscle tone and alignment.

Equipment-based Pilates is also an option, and involves using specialised pieces of equipment with names such as the Reformer, Cadillac, Ladder Barrel or Wunda Chair. The equipment provides resistance and support for the body as required.

One of the best things about Pilates is that it caters for just about everyone, regardless of age and fitness level. See below for some of the other benefits of Pilates.



## Benefits of Pilates

- Improves posture
- Develops greater strength and muscle tone
- Improves flexibility
- Increases joint mobility
- Develops more efficient respiratory, lymphatic and circulatory systems
- Improves mobility, flexibility and stabilisation of the spine
- Improves physical co-ordination and balance
- Facilitates injury prevention and physical rehabilitation
- Relieves stress and tension and promotes a sense of well-being
- Improves body awareness

# Exercise Myths

**BUSTED**

- **If you don't exercise frequently then there is no point** – You will benefit more if you exercise on a regular basis but any exercise is better than no exercise. Even moderate exercise, such as walking or gardening can have benefits.
- **Lifting weights will make women look bulky** – Most women's bodies do not produce nearly enough testosterone to become "bulky". Lifting weights can make you more lean and flexible and also help fight off osteoporosis.
- **"No pain, no gain"** – While you might experience some soreness for a day or two after exercising, you should never hurt beyond that. If soreness worsens or lasts for a long time there may be something wrong. If you experience pain during exercise you should stop and rest as it can be a warning sign of an exhausted muscle or torn ligament.
- **Muscle turns to fat if you stop exercising** – Fat and muscle are two different types of tissue and it is impossible for one to convert into the other. Muscle can decrease in size if you stop exercising, and you can put on fat at the same time, but these are two separate processes.
- **If you're not working up a sweat, you're not working hard enough** – Sweating is your body's way of cooling itself. It is not necessarily an indicator of exertion. It is possible to burn a significant amount of calories through light exercise such as walking, without breaking into a sweat.

# Eating Out - The Healthy Way!

When eating out in restaurants or cafes it is often easy to have more fat, salt and calories than you realise. You can also end up eating more than you would have done if you had made the food yourself. Following the suggestions below will help you to make healthier food choices and control your portion sizes when eating out:

- Try not to have lots of bread or other nibbles before your meal arrives.
- Choose smaller serving sizes e.g. pasta dishes often have an entree sized option which may be more than adequate.
- Choose dishes that are grilled, poached, steamed, boiled or stir-fried.
- Avoid dishes that are battered or deep-fried.
- Choose tomato or vegetable based sauces instead of creamy or cheese based sauces.
- Order a side dish of vegetables without butter or a salad with dressing on the side.
- Eat slowly and don't feel you have to clear your plate – only eat until you are full.
- Wait until you have eaten your main course before ordering a dessert.
- If you go for dessert, order dishes made with fresh fruit or a sorbet.
- Try sharing an entree or a dessert with a friend instead of having one each.
- Avoid adding extra salt to your meal at the table.



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## Nutrition Claims

Labels on food products often carry a variety of nutrition claims such as 'low fat', 'low salt' or 'high fibre'. While these nutrition claims can be useful as a general guide, it is important to check the nutrition information panel for more detailed information. Nutrition claims can be misleading and can trick you into thinking that a product is healthier than it actually is. Look out for the following labelling tricks and traps:

**1. 'Reduced fat'** – This claim means that the product contains less fat than the regular version of the product. This does not necessarily mean that it is low in fat as these products often have high levels of fat in the first place e.g. cheese, cream, desserts.

**2. 'Fat free'** – 'Fat free' products are not necessarily a healthy choice as they can still be high in sugar, salt and calories.

**3. 'Made with real fruit'** – This claim can be misleading as often the real fruit is found in such small quantities that its health benefits are negligible. Many of these products often contain more corn syrup and sugar than they do fruit.

**4. 'Light' or 'Lite'** – These terms do not necessarily mean that the product is low in calories or fat. It can often refer to the texture, colour or taste of a product.

**5. 'No cholesterol' or 'cholesterol free'** – Even though a product may have no cholesterol, it can still be high in saturated or trans fats which are still not good for you.

### NUTRITION CLAIM GUIDELINES

For a manufacturer to make specific nutrition claims, their products must meet the following criteria:

- Reduced fat – 25% less fat than the regular product
- Low fat – 3g of fat or less per 100g
- Fat free - Less than 0.15% fat.
- Low salt – 120mg of sodium or less per 100g
- High fibre – At least 3g of dietary fibre per serve

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