

# Change your life

stop the pain of **gout** by  
bringing your uric acid down



# Gout is not your fault

A lot of people think that gout is caused by food and drink such as seafood, meat and beer.

A New Zealand research study found that what you eat and drink only makes a difference of 10% to your uric acid (also called urate).\*

**90%**

of high uric acid is caused by your:

- genes
- kidneys
- weight



**10%**

of high uric acid is caused by food and drink

Gout is caused by too much uric acid in your blood. Most Māori and Pacific peoples have genes which stop their kidneys getting rid of extra uric acid in their urine.

It is normal to have uric acid in our blood because our bodies need some uric acid. Most people get rid of any extra uric acid in their urine.

Most Māori and Pacific peoples will need to take uric acid medicine to bring their uric acid down.

\*Major et al. Evaluation of the diet wide contribution to serum urate levels: meta-analysis of population based cohorts BMJ 2018; 363 :k3951 doi:10.1136/bmj.k3951

# Gout is caused by too much uric acid in your blood



Gout attacks happen when there is too much uric acid in your blood and the acid turns into very sharp crystals in your joints. These crystals can damage your joints, bones and kidneys.

Gout does not go away when the pain of the gout attack goes away. You still have too much uric acid in your blood and crystals in your joints. This means you still have gout.

Māori men and Pacific men get really bad gout much earlier than other groups. So young Māori men and young Pacific men will need to decide to take uric acid medicine when they are in their 20s and 30s.

# Gout attacks affect your life



**Gout attacks can damage your joints, bones and kidneys.**

Gout attacks stop you from:

- working
- playing with your kids
- playing sport
- going fishing and diving
- going out with family and friends
- going to church and community events.

# Change your life – stop gout attacks by bringing your uric acid down



# How can I bring my uric acid down?

**Take uric acid medicine every day to bring down your uric acid.**

There are three types of uric acid medicines. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will explain which uric acid medicine is right for you and why. They will also talk to you about how to take your uric acid medicine.

**These uric acid medicines stop your body making too much uric acid**



**This uric acid medicine helps your body get rid of extra uric acid in your urine**



You will start on a low dose of uric acid medicine. Every month your dose will be increased until your uric acid level comes down to .36 mmol/L or .30 mmol/L if you have lumps of uric acid crystals under your skin.

**You must take your uric acid medicine every day.** If you stop taking your uric acid medicine, then your uric acid will increase very quickly. You will get a painful gout attack.

You might get a gout attack when you first start taking uric acid medicine as your body gets rid of the extra uric acid already in your body.

To help you manage any gout attacks, your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will give you a gout attack medicine to take for 3 to 6 months when you first start taking uric acid medicine.

# Deciding to take uric acid medicine



**Talk to someone you trust to help you decide.**

**Make a list of the good and not so good things about taking uric acid medicine.**

This will help you decide whether to take uric acid medicine.

What is <b>good</b> about taking uric acid medicine.	What is <b>not so good</b> about taking uric acid medicine.
No more pain	Having to remember to take medicines every day
Keeping my job and supporting my whānau/family	

My decision is:

Take uric acid medicine  Not take uric acid medicine at the moment

# Gout medicines

## 1. Uric acid medicines – bring your uric acid down

Take uric acid medicine every day. This will stop you having gout attacks.

**Serious side effects of uric acid medicines** – stop taking your uric acid medicine if you get a bad skin rash. Tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist immediately. You will need to change to another uric acid medicine.

## 2. Gout attack medicines – treat the pain of gout attacks

You will need to take a low dose of a gout attack medicine to prevent gout attacks for 3 to 6 months when you start your uric acid medicine. It takes time for your uric acid to come down.

Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist might also give you another medicine to take for a week in case you get a bad gout attack.

**Serious side effects of gout attack medicines** – stop taking gout attack medicines if you vomit, get really bad pain in your stomach or blood in your poo. Tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist immediately. You will need to change to another gout attack medicine.



### Gout attack medicines

Colchicine – Colgout®

Prednisone – Apo-Prednisone®

Naproxen – Noflam® or Naprosyn®

Diclofenac – Voltaren®

Diclofenac – Sandoz®

# Starting on uric acid medicine

## Allopurinol or Probenecid or Febuxostat

Circle your uric acid medicine and fill in details of your medicine – you start on a low dose increasing monthly to the right dose for you

Every day take	from	/	/	until	/	/
Every day take	from	/	/	until	/	/
Every day take	from	/	/	until	/	/
Every day take	from	/	/	until	/	/
Every day take	from	/	/	until	/	/
Right dose for you – every day take						

## Gout attack medicine – Colchicine – 3 to 6 months to prevent gout attacks

From / / to / / mg tablets

## Short term gout attack medicine – Prednisone / Naproxen / Diclofenac every day to treat a gout attack quickly

Follow instructions on the label.

### Important

- Take your uric acid medicine every day even if you get a gout attack.
- Set up an alarm on your phone to remind you to take your medicines every day or get someone to remind you.
- **Don't take any old gout medicines you already have** without asking your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if the medicine is right for you.
- **Keep your medicines safe** – in a high place and out of the reach of children.



# Matt's gout story

## How old were you when you first got gout attacks?

I think I was 23 when I first had gout. I thought I'd broken my toe. I knew what gout was because most men in my whānau had it, but they were a lot older than me. When I limped into work, a colleague of mine looked at my foot and said "Bro, you've got gout". I thought he was wrong, but after a couple of days of pain I saw my doctor who confirmed it was gout.

## How did those gout attacks affect you?

Gout sucks. When I got a gout attack, I'd immediately feel like a failure and know that everyone I met was going to say "Been on the beers aye" or "Too many kinas, Matt". You wouldn't mock someone with asthma so why is it okay to mock someone with gout.

When my gout was really poorly managed, it impacted on my mahi too. I have a very supportive employer and taking time to recover has always been possible, but even that support can be worn thin. I hated taking so much time off and being useless on the couch. It also meant my partner had to do 110% of the parenting and looking after the house. This really impacted on how I felt about myself.

I love to keep fit by lifting weights. I couldn't do this when I had an attack. For a while after an attack I still couldn't use the joint 100%. Exercise is part of my self-care and when that isn't a part of my life, I feel like crap.

## What made you decide to start taking allopurinol?

I've always known about allopurinol and its benefits. For me, the barrier to taking allopurinol was the logistics. The label says "Take in the morning with food" ... but I don't eat breakfast, so I'd wait until lunch, but then I would forget. And this continued long enough that I'd end up not taking allopurinol for months. One day my brother who also has gout said to me "Bro just take it whenever. It's better in you without kai, than sitting in the cupboard".

## How is your life different now?

I have gone the longest between attacks and that is a massive win.

# Luka's\* gout story

## **How old were you when you first got gout attacks?**

I got my first gout attack when I was 23. I wasn't surprised – lots of my uncles and older cousins have gout.

## **How did those gout attacks affect you?**

Well, the attacks were really painful but they didn't last that long at first. I would take a couple of days off work and then it was okay as long as I took the pain pills early.

## **What made you decide to start taking allopurinol?**

When I was 27 I got a really bad attack. I was taking lots and lots of pain pills and the pain just wasn't going away. I couldn't go to work. Then I got a really bad pain in my guts and I went to the doctor. He told me the pain pills were giving me the stomach pain and I had to stop taking them straight away. He told me about allopurinol but I didn't want to start taking pills every day. I was too young for that.

I had to leave my flat and go home to live with Mum and she was doing everything for me because all I could do was lie on the sofa. And then my boss came around and gave me a letter saying I was going to lose my job. I really loved my job and I was good at it. And I didn't want to be a burden on Mum – I wanted to help her. So I went to the GP and started on allopurinol the next day. It took about 6 months to get my uric acid down and I had a couple of attacks when the doctor was getting the allopurinol dose right but I had extra pain medicine for that and I could manage.

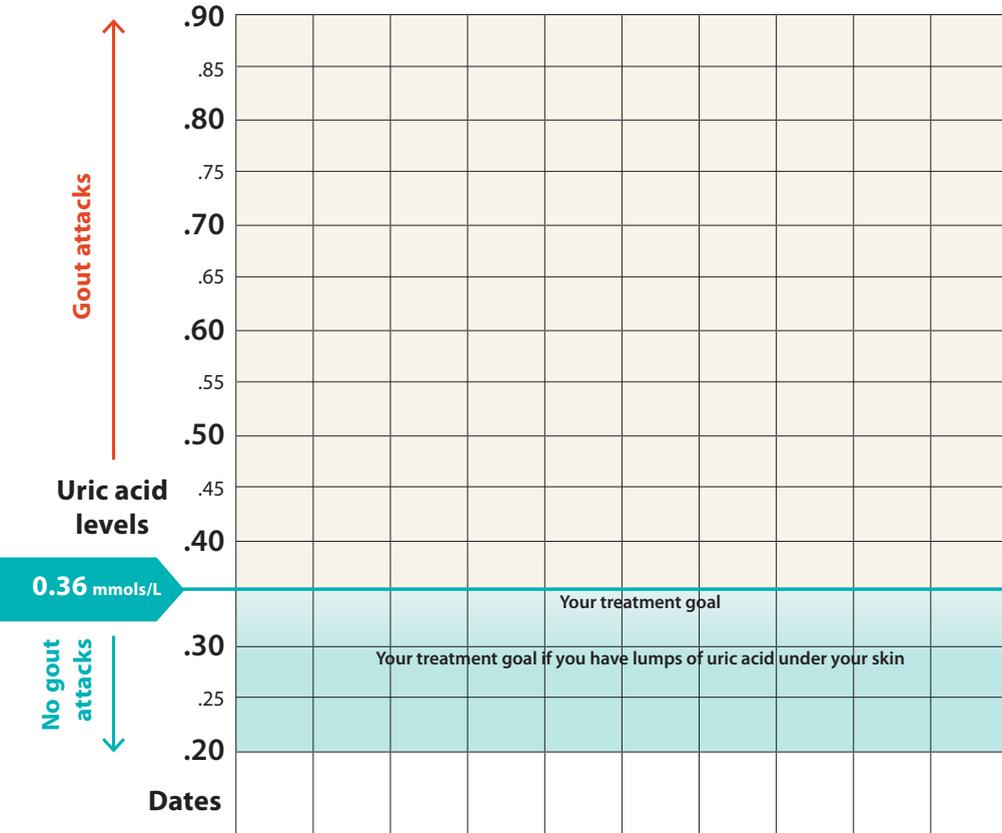
## **How is your life different now?**

I am a team leader now at my job. I am living in a flat with my girlfriend and recently I was able to help my Mum by paying for some repairs to her house.

\* Name changed

# Get your uric acid checked regularly

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist where and how often you need to get your uric acid checked. **Write the results of your uric acid tests down here.**



For more information on gout go to: [www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/g/gout-overview/](http://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/g/gout-overview/)

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