

## International Study Backs Diet for Treating Gout

It's not your father's gout anymore. That's the latest message from researchers, who estimate that gout affects 2.1 million Americans. And yet, they say, it is much misunderstood, frequently misdiagnosed and often undertreated.

That's why the European League Against Rheumatism, an international task force of specialists, recently combed the research on gout to come up with proven recommendations for managing the condition. The findings were published May 30 in the online edition of *Annals of Rheumatic Diseases*.

**Got Gout?** Gout is caused by a build-up of uric acid in joints, which triggers pain and swelling. Uric acid occurs as a normal byproduct of purines, compounds found naturally in high-protein foods.

When too much uric acid builds up in the bloodstream, it crystallizes and settles in joints, causing excruciating pain. The big toe is often the first joint affected.

**New Agreement on Treatment.** In the past, diet was key to managing gout, until medications were developed and it became secondary and nearly forgotten. Now, after studying the research, the task force experts have agreed on new guidelines for gout that strongly recommend both medication *and* lifestyle changes.

## Weight Manager

### Gem of a Health Guide Masquerades as Diet Book

*Eat, Drink & Weigh Less* by Mollie Katzen and Walter Willett, M.D. (Hyperion, 2006).

What do you get when you pair up a leading nutrition authority with a beloved cookbook author? A gem of a nutrition guide. The best part? It's not really a diet, but a way to continually evaluate how you eat and live, then strive to do better each day. As you improve your diet, you'll likely shed pounds.

**Nine Turning Points.** The book doesn't follow an on-a-diet, off-a-diet mindset. Rather, Katzen (author of *The Moosewood Cookbook*) and Harvard's Willett guide you in a series of gradual shifts they call the Nine Turning Points: eating more fruits and vegetables, selecting good fats, upgrading carbohydrates, choosing healthy proteins, drinking water, using alcohol in moderation, taking a multi, being more active and eating "mindfully."

#### *Strongest Diet Recommendations:*

- Lose weight.
- Reduce beer and other alcohol intake.
- Limit intake of purine-rich foods like seafood and meat.

The research suggests that any one of these changes is likely to reduce the severity of gout symptoms by 15% to 50%.

#### *More Top Diet Recommendations:*

- Lower blood levels of cholesterol and triglycerides, if high.
- Keep blood sugar in a safe range.
- Control high blood pressure.

All of these can contribute to uric acid build-up. And all improve when eating a diet that focuses on fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes and whole grains, while limiting the intake of meat and alcohol.

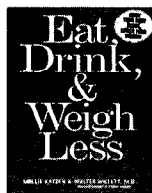
**Medication Still Required.** As important as eating the right foods, says the task force, is taking the right medication. Allopurinol (*Aloprim*, *Zyloprim*) prevents uric acid build-up long-term. Colchicine treats acute attacks by reducing inflammation.

**EN's Gout Guidelines.** These diet recommendations for preventing and treating gout are remarkably similar to current advice for preventing heart disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes: Manage weight, limit alcohol and eat a plant-based diet.

**Your Body Score.** The book centers around a set of questions about what you eat. By answering them daily at first, then weekly, you focus on what you're doing right. Instead of counting calories, carbs or fat grams, you aim to increase your score.

**A Lot to Like.** Katzen's vegetarian recipes are legendary, but here she offers meat options too. You don't even need to follow the 21-day diet to gain (or should we say lose) from the book. The authors provide ample tips for eating out, eating while traveling and eating when rushed, plus they list 10 "safe treats" to eat and much more. Willett adds "Science Bites" gleaned from Harvard's Nurses' Health Study to anchor the book scientifically.

*Wholeheartedly recommended!*



## How to Stick With Your Fitness Routine

*"Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence....Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."*

That quote from Calvin Coolidge could be the mantra of two well-respected exercise experts. Why is persistence the new watchword? While getting active is a goal everyone aspires to, staying active is a whole new ball game.

The excuses we make are endless: "I'm too tired," "I'm too busy," "It's too hot," "It's too cold," "I've got a cold," "It's boring." Mustering the motivation to get started isn't really the hard part; sticking with it is. But here's help.

**Surprising New Angle on Fitness.** Fitness experts and authors (*Fitness and Health*, Human Kinetics, 2006) Brian Sharkey, Ph.D., past president of the American College of Sports Medicine, and Steven Gaskill, Ph.D., U.S. Olympic ski team coach for 10 years, offer fresh advice to everyday nonathletes on how to get fit and stay that way.

Don't strive for maximum fitness, they say. Instead, your goal should be "sustained fitness." Rather than measuring your heart rate, counting repetitions or logging laps, find an exercise you truly enjoy, one that provides you with purpose and a sense of accomplishment. Then focus on maintaining that activity until you are hooked.

**Develop an Addicted State of Mind.** Sharkey and Gaskill's advice? Look at exercise as a positive addiction that can take up to a year to develop. After that, you'll likely be hooked. Based on their experience with athletes and nonathletes alike, the authors identify tips, below, for finding the best activity for your sustained fitness efforts.

#### *Choose an activity that:*

- Is not competitive.
- You can do for one hour a day.
- Is easy for you to do without much mental effort.
- You can do alone or at least don't have to rely on others to do it.
- You believe has some physical, mental or spiritual value.
- You believe your performance will improve if you persist.
- You can do without self-criticizing.

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