

Tips to talk with your patients about gout and kidney disease

Kidney disease is one of the leading causes of gout. 1 out of 10 patients with kidney disease have gout. Gout can also cause kidney disease. Patients with untreated gout can have more frequent gout attacks that limit their daily activities. Untreated gout can also lead to serious health problems over time, such as:

- Joint damage and deformity
- Tophi (clumps of urate crystals that harden on the joints under the skin)
- Emotional distress from long-lasting pain and an inability to carry out daily tasks

In 2020, the American Kidney Fund (AKF) conducted a survey of 350 patients to learn more about their needs and experiences living with gout. As a healthcare professional, you can help your patients better manage their condition using the survey findings and tips below.

Key survey findings

After experiencing their first gout symptoms, **63%** of kidney disease patients went to their doctor for more information.

Nearly half of patients with kidney disease and gout reported no one on their healthcare team talked to them about gout when they were diagnosed with kidney disease.

Tips to effectively talk with your patients about gout

Use easy-to-understand language to explain gout and answer your patients' questions

To avoid medical jargon, use common words and define need-to-know words using plain language.

Instead of medical jargon...

...Use plain language

✘ Inflammation	✔ Pain, redness and swelling
✘ Serum uric acid level	✔ Amount of uric acid in your blood - uric acid is a waste product made when your body breaks down certain foods
✘ Hyperuricemia	✔ Too much uric acid in your blood
✘ Tophi	✔ Crystals that form on your joints under your skin
✘ Remission	✔ When symptoms go away for a period of time

Plan time to have a conversation about the connection between gout and kidney disease with newly diagnosed patients

If your patient seems overwhelmed with information, plan to have the conversation at a follow-up visit. **You could say:**

“There can be a lot of information to take in when you are just diagnosed with kidney disease. In our next visit, I would like to talk with you about your chance of gout, which is a type of arthritis that kidney disease can cause.”



Share online resources where your patients can learn more about gout, such as

[KidneyFund.org/gout](https://www.kidneyfund.org/gout)

Key survey findings

Patients with gout are most interested in learning more about treatment options for gout, including how to relieve pain during gout attacks and prevent future gout attacks.

When patients with gout were asked how they feel while talking with their healthcare team about gout, their top 3 responses were:

- Supported
- Comfortable
- Accepted

Tips to effectively talk with your patients about gout

Use the teach-back method when you share action steps that you want your patients to remember

To use teach-back:

- 1 Use a phrase to let your patient know you want to check that you explained things well. Then, ask an open-ended question to have them explain the information back to you in their own words. For example:

“I want to make sure I explained that clearly. What can you do next time you have a gout attack?”

- 2 If your patient misunderstood anything, re-explain it in a new way and ask them to explain it back to you again.

Continue showing empathy for your patients' concerns

- Make eye contact with your patients while talking with them.
- Use active listening by responding to what your patients are saying.
- Verbally acknowledge your patients' feelings to help them feel heard and understood. For example:

“What I'm hearing is...” or “It sounds like you are feeling...” (then repeat the information in your own words and describe the underlying emotion)

- It is important to remind your patients that chronic gout is not their fault and not a result of their behavior. However, you can still empower them with tips to help them manage their gout symptoms.
- Offer to connect your patients to a mental health provider if they are struggling emotionally. If your patients explain that their symptoms get in the way of their daily activities, offer a doctor's note for their employer or school so they can take time off.

Every provider has a role in helping patients manage gout and other complications of kidney disease. Continue to stay updated on your patients' medical histories and current health concerns, so you can make informed recommendations for their care.

Learn more about gout and kidney disease at [KidneyFund.org/gout](https://www.kidneyfund.org/gout)

Goutful.

Learn the truth about gout and kidney disease.