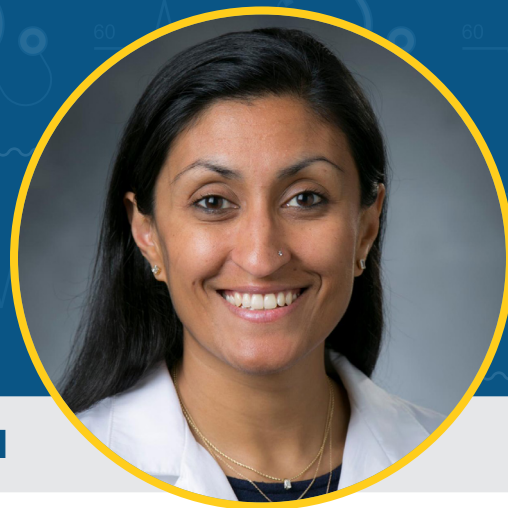


YOUR GOUT QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Gout & Heart Disease



Perspective from **NEHA J. PAGIDIPATI, MD, MPH**

What is the link between gout and cardiovascular disease?

Gout is associated with worse outcomes in patients with coronary artery disease. More specifically, it increases patients' risk of having a heart attack or stroke by 15%. It also doubles the risk of death from heart failure.

Cardiovascular disease is the world's leading cause of death, so we're constantly trying to prevent it, especially in people who are at the highest risk. That includes people with inflammatory disorders, including gout.

The problem is that most people with gout don't realize they are more likely to have a heart attack or stroke. We need to be aggressive about educating patients so they can take the right steps to lower their risk.

What cardiovascular disease risk factors should people living with gout be aware of?

If you are living with gout or have elevated uric acid levels, it's important to ask your health care provider about how you can:

- Bring your blood pressure and cholesterol within normal range
- Make sure your diabetes is being well managed, if you have it
- Quit smoking, if you do.

Many of these risk factors are interrelated, and addressing any of them will help lower your cardiovascular disease risk.

Does controlling gout reduce cardiovascular disease risk?

The science is not definitive on this, but it won't hurt. Some anti-inflammatory medications used to treat gout may also reduce one's risk of a heart attack.

Healthy behaviors such as eating a nutritious diet and increasing physical activity can also help – with both gout management and lowering the risk of cardiovascular disease.

I would recommend that anyone with a high uric acid level should take steps to lower it by working with their health care provider.

If people minimize other risk factors, does having gout really matter?

I've seen patients who, seemingly out of the blue, had a heart attack or stroke. They say to me, "I don't have a family history of cardiovascular disease" or "My blood pressure is good. My cholesterol isn't high."

"Yes," I say to them, "but you have gout, and that's also a risk factor."

Health care providers, collectively, should make sure we're taking the time to walk through cardiovascular disease comorbidities with every patient who has any inflammatory disease – including gout.