

This leaflet is to tell you a little more about gout, what your doctor  
you can do to help yourself.

#### What is gout?

Gout is a disorder in which periodic and sudden recurrence of painful swollen joints occurs. Any joint may be affected but the big toe is the commonest.

#### What causes gout?

The underlying cause of gout is not yet known but patients who suffer from it acquire an increased amount of a substance called urate (or uric acid) in their blood. This can then form crystals which are deposited in joints and cause symptoms of gout. Gout is not caused by "high living", but too much alcohol and certain foods can bring on attacks in susceptible people.

#### Is gout hereditary?

Yes, gout is generally believed to be an hereditary condition, so it is likely that a member of your family, your father or your grandfather, suffered from gout.

#### Is Gout common?

Yes, up to a hundred thousand Australians suffer from gout. Most of these are male and aged from 30 upwards.

#### Is gout serious?

It can be. While some patients only get occasional attacks these often become more frequent if the disease is not treated. In addition, high untreated concentrations of urate in the blood can produce kidney damage and other problems such as permanent disfiguring of joints. That is why diagnosis and treatment of gout are important.

#### Can gout be cured?

No, the chemical defect which causes gout is life long. However, with modern drugs, urate levels can be controlled and this prevents any further attacks or any other consequences of gout. For this reason it is important that you continue medication even when you have no symptoms.

#### What can my doctor do?

Your doctor cannot cure gout. However, Allopurinol has been prescribed for you which, together with a sensible diet, will lower urate to a normal level and thereby prevent a further excruciating attack of gout.

#### What can I Do?

Follow your doctor's advice. Keep taking medication even though you feel well. Allopurinol is packed in a convenient calendar pack for this purpose. In the early stages of treatment your doctor may have prescribed both Allopurinol and another drug. It is important that you take both until further advised by your doctor. Eat a well balanced diet, relatively low in fat. You are particularly advised to moderate your intake of beer, kidneys, liver, sweet breads, herring, sardines, anchovies, meat extracts, turkey and shell fish as these are high in substances which increase urate levels.

Do not allow yourself to get overweight. This does not mean that you should go on a starvation diet but rather eat sensibly and take regular exercise.

If you have to go to hospital for any reason please be sure to inform the doctor that you have gout and are on medication.

If you go on holiday or away on business make sure you take an ample supply of Allopurinol with you.

Provided you take your Allopurinol regularly you can lead a normal life in every respect.