



## Don't Let Gout Ruin Your Holidays

The holidays are known for delectable food and drink. But if they're brimming with purines, overindulgence can lead to gout, a form of arthritis marked by flare-ups of extreme pain lasting for days or weeks.

Purines are chemical compounds found in all plants and animals in varying degrees. The body converts them into uric acid, which is filtered out of the bloodstream by the kidneys. But when there's an overload of uric acid, it can accumulate in the joints, crystallize, and stab like daggers.

Men are much more likely to sustain gout attacks than women. Other risk factors include obesity, hypertension, kidney dysfunction, and taking certain medications.

The big-toe joint is the most common target of gout — it's the coolest part of the body, and uric acid is very sensitive to temperature changes (i.e., crystallization) — but no joints are exempt. Gout symptoms include sudden onset of intense pain — often in the middle of the night — redness, swelling, warmth, and extreme sensitivity.

To prevent gout flare-ups, avoid the following purine-rich foods (or partake in moderation):

- Shellfish (shrimp, crab, etc.), salmon, scallops, sardines, organ meats (e.g., liver or kidney), and red meat.
- Alcohol, especially beer, which also interferes with the body's ability to process and eliminate uric acid.
- Foods high in sugar, especially high-fructose corn syrup.
- High-sodium foods. Sodium doesn't contribute purines but can cause dehydration, which raises uric-acid levels.

Drink plenty of water and try to manage holiday stress. Stress affects our body chemistry in a way that elevates uric-acid levels.

If you experience gout over the holidays, contact our office. If treated promptly with lifestyle changes and medication, gout typically can be well managed. If it's ignored, chronic pain and eventual joint destruction are possible.



# Summer-Ready Toenails Require a Winter Head Start

If you want unsightly fungal nails (onychomycosis) cured or well on the way to recovery by sandal and beach season, treatment should begin in early winter. Eradicated toenail fungus leaves behind visual effects that will remain until the healthy nail fully grows in — that may take roughly six months.

In its early stages, a fungal nail may be identified by white or yellowish dots appearing under the tip of the nail. Attack the problem at that point. Early treatment equals easier remedy.

As fungal nails progress, they may become fully discolored, thickened, and brittle. Eventually they can split, rise up from the nail bed, emit a foul odor, and become painful. Diabetics with toenail fungus may develop cellulitis — a serious bacterial skin infection.

Don't try hiding fungal nails with toenail polish. It just worsens the problem. If one toenail is beset by fungus, neighboring toenails are next. The fungus can also become entrenched between the toes, migrate to the sole, and spread to a person's hand (and other people) if it touches the foot.

Fungi love warm, moist environments and only need microscopic abrasions on the foot to invade and set up shop. Reduce your risk of contracting toenail fungus this winter:

- Change wet shoes and socks throughout the day as needed.
- Treat shoes with antifungal sprays and powders.
- Rotate shoes each day to allow the unworn pair to fully dry out.
- Wash your feet at least once per day.

Treatments for fungal toenails include prescription topical and oral medications, and laser therapy. Medical-grade, breathable resin nail applications are a temporary, natural-looking aesthetic upgrade *while the nail is being treated*. Over-the-counter treatments are virtually useless.

Don't allow fungal toenails to hinder your summer. Contact our office today to schedule treatment.

## Mark Your Calendars

- Dec. 1** Eat a Red Apple Day: The only apple native to North America? The crab apple.
- Dec. 4** Santa's List Day: Naughty or nice? Santa needs a bottom line to place his coal order.
- Dec. 8** National Brownie Day: A fresh batch for family or friends earns you brownie points.
- Dec. 16** Chocolate-Covered Anything Day: Pickles? Insects? Where do you draw the line?
- Dec. 21** Crossword Puzzle Day: *New York World* newspaper published the first one in 1913.
- Dec. 23** Festivus: Airing of grievances. Feats of strength. Aluminum pole. Thanks, *Seinfeld!*
- Dec. 27** Fruitcake Day: Attention, Christmas recipients. Eat, toss, or prepare for regifting!

# 'Tis the Season ... for House Fires

Over the winter, the risk of house fires rises, given the cold weather and heaters, fireplaces, and woodstoves kicking into action. The holiday season stokes the flames even more.

Tragically, Christmas tree fires regularly make headlines. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), one in 45 home fires sparked by a Christmas tree result in a fatality — all other home fires, one in 139.

A Christmas tree should be watered every day and shouldn't be shedding needles. Most freshly-cut trees begin to dry out in four weeks — or sooner, if neglected. Keep it at least three feet away from heat sources.

Inspect Christmas tree lights for damage and frayed wires. Always unplug the lights when leaving the house or going to bed.

Holiday lights should be used as intended — for example, indoor-use lights are not meant for exterior decorating. Don't connect more than three strands of lights together and avoid using staples or nails to pierce wires when displaying outdoor lights.

The NFPA reports that roughly 23 home fires are caused by candle usage each day, peaking on Christmas, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day. Keep combustible items clear of candles, and place candles in locations where they can't easily be knocked over.

Culinary activity surges during the holiday season. Items left too close to the stove can catch fire, and sometimes with the hustle and bustle, food on the stove is forgotten about. If you deep-fry a turkey, do it outdoors on a flat, level surface at least 10 feet from the house.

Maximize home fire safety by testing your smoke detectors monthly, changing their batteries annually, and keeping a working fire extinguisher handy.



## Crustless Jalapeño Mini Quiches

*Servings: 24 mini quiches; prep time: 10 minutes; cook time: 25 minutes; total time: 35 minutes*

*These crustless jalapeño mini quiches are packed with flavor, low in carbs, high in protein, and the perfect bite-sized holiday appetizer to serve at your next family gathering!*

### Ingredients

- 6 eggs
- 1/2 cup chopped broccoli
- 1/2 cup chopped red pepper
- 1/4 cup chopped jalapeños, deseeded
- 1/2 cup chopped red onion
- 1/4 cup grated cheddar cheese
- 1/8 cup milk
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper

### Directions

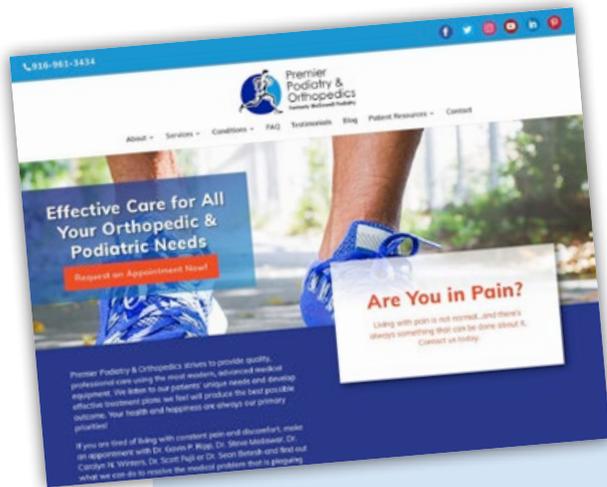
1. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
2. Prepare all veggies by chopping as small as possible. Whisk eggs, milk, veggies, cheese, salt, and pepper in a large bowl.
3. Grease mini muffin cups with olive oil, and carefully pour egg mixture into egg cups, filling to within a couple of millimeters from the top.
4. Cook in the oven for 25 minutes.
5. Let cool and serve on a large serving platter.

*(Recipe courtesy of Taylor Stinson at <https://thegirlonbloor.com>.)*



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# Don't Rush Shoes for Your Little One

Let's cut to the chase: Babies who are not yet walking should not be wearing shoes. There's no hurry even after they begin to walk.

Allow babies to be barefoot as much as possible. It promotes muscle growth, toe grasping, balance, and coordination. It also strengthens the arch and ligaments of the foot and ankle — especially when they're walking.

Shoes are an impediment to babies. They change the natural way babies use their muscles and interfere with sensory information the child would otherwise pick up about the world around them via their feet. Toddlers keep their heads up more when they're walking barefoot; the sensory information they receive from their bare feet is sufficient. When wearing shoes, they tend to look down more frequently, which is when they fall.

Going barefoot also promotes good posture. In addition, proper development of a baby's/toddler's feet can determine their activity level in the future.

When it's cold outside, loose socks and booties are enough to keep a baby's feet warm. They allow for movement and offer breathability. Make sure booties conform to the shape of the child's feet.

Of course, when a child is walking, chilly weather or a gravelly driveway call for shoes. Shoes should be flexible and light-weight, and they should not be restrictive. Select shoes made of natural fibers, such as leather or canvas, which enable your toddler's feet to breathe. Some synthetic fibers trap heat, make a child's feet sweat, and open the door to blisters.

If your child has begun to walk, it's a good time to schedule an appointment at our office. We can check on their development and more easily correct potential structural issues.