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## Meet Our Team!

### LINDA GORGA

Linda Gorga is the administrative assistant to Dr. Weitzman. NorthPointe Foot & Ankle was pleased to welcome Linda to the team when Dr. Weitzman began treating patients here in July of 2012.

Linda is a familiar face to the longtime patients of Dr. Weitzman. Since 2001, she has been greeting his patients, handling their appointments and medical records.



As the mother of five grown children, Linda is a proud grandmother

of six grandchildren — soon to be eight! When she is not in the office, she is almost always spending time with one of them! The grandchildren are age 2 weeks to 7 years and keep her on her toes!

# NorthPointe News

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 3

MARCH 2014

## WHAT IS GOUT?

### What Is Gout?

Gout is a disorder that results from the build-up of uric acid in the tissues or a joint. It most often affects the joint of the big toe.

### Causes

Gout attacks are caused by deposits of crystallized uric acid in the joint. Uric acid is present in the blood and eliminated in the urine, but in people who have gout, uric acid accumulates and crystallizes in the joints. Uric acid is the result of the breakdown of purines, chemicals that are found naturally in our bodies and in food. Some people develop gout because their kidneys have difficulty eliminating normal amounts of uric acid, while others produce too much uric acid.

Gout occurs most commonly in the big toe because uric acid is sensitive to temperature changes. At cooler temperatures, uric acid turns into crystals. Since the toe is the part of the body that is farthest from the heart, it's also the coolest part of the body — and, thus, the most likely target of gout. However, gout can affect any joint in the body.

The tendency to accumulate uric acid is often inherited. Other factors that put a person at risk for developing gout include: high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, surgery, chemotherapy, stress, and certain medications and vitamins. For example, the body's ability to remove uric acid can be negatively affected by taking aspirin, some diuretic medications ("water pills"), and the vitamin

niacin (also called nicotinic acid). While gout is more common in men aged 40 to 60 years, it can occur in younger men as well as in women.

Consuming foods and beverages that contain high levels of purines can trigger an attack of gout. Some foods contain more purines than others and have been associated with an in-



crease of uric acid, which leads to gout. You may be able to reduce your chances of getting a gout attack by limiting or avoiding shellfish, organ meats (kidney, liver,

etc.), red wine, beer, and red meat.

### Symptoms

An attack of gout can be miserable, marked by the following symptoms:

- Intense pain that comes on suddenly — often in the middle of the night or upon arising
- Signs of inflammation such as redness, swelling, and warmth over the joint.

### Diagnosis

To diagnose gout, your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle surgeon will ask questions about your personal and family medical history, followed by an examination of the affected joint. Laboratory tests and x-rays are sometimes ordered to determine if the inflammation is caused by something other than gout.

### GOUT: WHAT ARE GOOD FOODS?

Individuals suffering from Gout are encouraged to avoid foods with higher levels of purine. However, the following list of food and drinks are recommended for consumption:

- Low-fat dairy products
- Foods made with complex carbohydrates, such as whole grains, brown rice, oats, and beans
- A moderate amount of wine (up to two 5 ounce servings per day)
- Coffee (may lower serum uric acid levels)
- Vitamin C (500 mg per day may mildly lower uric acid levels)





# Stay Balanced!

Many people experience increasing difficulty with balance and safe mobility as they age, which leads to the common and serious problem of falls. These problems are associated with loss of confidence and decreasing ability to function independently. In many cases it leads to the consideration of institutional care. Injuries from falls are a major cause of death in the older population. Fortunately, most causes of falls and instability can be treated successfully and the risk of falling reduced.

## How common are falls and balance problems in older persons?

Each year, falls occur in over a third of persons over age 65, and in over half of persons over age 75. About a third of the older population reports some difficulty with balance or ambulation. This percentage increases in frequency and severity after age 75.

## What are the major causes of falls?

The most common causes of falls include environmental hazards (such as slippery floors and loose rugs), weak muscles, unstable balance, dizziness, vision problems and side effects from medications (such as dizziness and confusion).

## How can I tell if I am at risk for falling?

The most important predictors of fall risk include: muscle weakness (difficulty rising from a sitting position without use of hands to push off); unsteady balance (needing to walk slowly or with a wide base of support to maintain balance); having fallen in the past year; and taking certain medications (some blood pressure medications as well as psychoactive medications, such as sedatives or anti-depressants).



## What can I do to decrease my chances of falling?

Ask your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle physician to evaluate your strength, balance, gait, entire medication list and overall risk factors for falls. The chances are good that there will be a number of things that can be done to reduce fall risk, such as adjusting medications, obtaining physical therapy, starting an exercise regimen, or receiving an assistive device such as a cane or walker, to make walking safer.

## What can be done to improve balance?

Similarly, there are a number of exercises and assistive devices that can improve stability. Ask your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle physician what would be best for you.

## How can I make my home environment safer?

There are many pamphlets available to assist in hazard-proofing your home environment. Alternatively, a home health provider, such as a visiting nurse or occupational therapist, can come to your home and provide a hands-on inspection and set of recommendations. Common recommendations include installing bathroom grab bars, improving lighting in key areas, removing hazardous conditions on the floor, and making stairways and entrance areas safer.

## What kind of walking aids are available and whom should I talk to about getting the right product?

A whole spectrum of walking aids are widely available, ranging from simple canes to elaborate types of walkers and wheelchairs. Any walking aid should be carefully measured to the right size and provide the optimal level of stability without creating too much dependency. When used properly, these aids can dramatically improve mobility and safety.

## Footwear & Fall Prevention

Choosing the right kind of footwear is an important factor in reducing your risk for falls. Here are a few recommendations to keep you safe and help avoid falling:

- Avoid shoes that are excessively flexible and worn.
- Proper fit is critical. Shoes that are too big can be a hazard, but so can shoes that are too small. Ill-fitting shoes can cause calluses, corns, and sores.
- Avoid excessively slick-soled shoes, as well as those that are too "grippy." A crepe sole is recommended because it also absorbs shock.
- Wearing shoes with low heels and a large or wide contact area may reduce the risk of a fall in everyday settings and activities. Anything with a very high or thick sole creates more imbalance. Avoid any shoe with a sole over half an inch.

If you would like to receive our monthly newsletter, send your email address to: [Doctors@NorthPointeFoot.com](mailto:Doctors@NorthPointeFoot.com)



American Diabetes Association Alert Day is a one day "wake-up call" asking the American public to take the Diabetes Risk Test to find out if they are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. Held on the fourth Tuesday of every March, the next Alert Day will be held on March 24, 2014 is also the perfect time to make an appointment for a Comprehensive Foot Exam by your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle physician.

The Diabetes Risk Test asks users to answer simple questions about weight, age, family history and other potential risk factors for pre-diabetes or Type 2 diabetes. You can be part of the movement to Stop Diabetes and get your free Diabetes Risk Test (English or Spanish) by visiting: [stopdiabetes.com](http://stopdiabetes.com) or by calling 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383).

For more information or advice on dealing with diabetes, or to schedule a Comprehensive Foot Exam, please contact our office at 248-545-0100.