

# Are opioids being inappropriately prescribed to treat gout?

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Although there are effective treatments for gout, the most common form of inflammatory arthritis, a new *Arthritis Care & Research* study found that opioids are commonly prescribed to patients with gout who seek

treatment at emergency departments.

In the study of 456 patients with acute gout discharged from emergency departments in Rhode Island, more than 28% received an opioid prescription. Of these, more than one-quarter of patients received 14 days or more of opioid prescriptions, longer than the natural course of a typical gout attack. Diabetes, gout attacks affecting multiple joints, and opioid use prior to admission were associated with an increased likelihood of receiving [opioid prescriptions](#).

"We have a number of medications that can treat acute gout effectively, almost completely eliminating the need to use opioids. The fact that 28% of patients are being treated with opioids, and many longer than 2 weeks, is alarming and provides an opportunity to reduce the burden of prescription opioids," said co-lead author Deepan Dalal, MD, MPH, of Brown University Warren Alpert School of Medicine, in Providence.

**More information:** Deepan S. Dalal et al, Prescription Opioid Use among Acute Gout Patients Discharged from the Emergency Department, *Arthritis Care & Research* (2019). [DOI: 10.1002/acr.23928](https://doi.org/10.1002/acr.23928)

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