



## **Viscosupplementation**

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The Center for Physical Excellence has noticed there are more clients coming into the clinic having received viscosupplementation for their knee pain. Knee osteoarthritis is the most common condition I have observed treated by this procedure. Viscosupplementation is administered by injecting the painful joint with hyaluronan. Despite the increased commonality, my patients usually have questions regarding the injections they receive and how it will impact their therapy. This article will discuss briefly osteoarthritis, what viscosupplementation is, why it is prescribed, and how Physical Therapy is utilized in conjunction with this procedure.

Osteoarthritis is caused by a gradual loss of cartilage in the joints. Bone spurring can form as a result. Symptoms of osteoarthritis include pain, stiffness, swelling, and bony changes. Other terms your doctor may use for osteoarthritis is osteoarthrosis or degenerative joint disease.

An estimated 30% of Americans ages 45-64, and 63-85% of Americans over 65 suffer from osteoarthritis. Conservative treatment includes pain medication, anti-inflammatories, Physical Therapy, ice, and cortisone injections.

Viscosupplementation in the form of hyaluronic injection has become more common, as well, for pain relief. The goal with any conservative treatment is to treat the condition without need for more extreme measures such as surgery.

Viscosupplementation is thought to decrease pain by increasing amount of hyaluronan in the joint. Normal joint fluid (synovial fluid) contains hyluronic acid which improve joint lubrication, cartilage nutrition and shock absorption. The schedule of injections varies with the type of product. You may receive one injection every week for three to five weeks total. Patient should notice a decrease in their pain approximately four to thirteen weeks after an injection. Pain relief may last several months. Product names include the following: Hyalgan, Synvisc, Supartz, Orthovisc, and Euflexxa. Hyaluronic injections are usually derived from rooster or chicken comb. Patients allergic to poultry and egg allergies may use Euflexxa, as it is not derived from a poultry source.



Physical Therapy in conjunction with hyaluronic injections is very valuable and can assist in maximizing the benefits of viscosupplementation via graded exercises and education. Physical Therapy can reduce pain, improve joint mobility, and increase strength resulting in improved quality of life. Aggressive physical activities should be avoided for a few days following the injection and your physical therapist can assist you in graduated exercises and education which improves your tolerance to normal daily activities and hobbies.

As always, we encourage you to speak with your Physician with any questions or concerns regarding viscosupplementation. Physical Therapy is recommended to maximize short and long-term results.