

Orthopaedic Connection

Say Hello To Supartz

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Most of my patients are understandably apprehensive about somebody poking their painful knee with a needle. I get that as the saying goes. So in this last part I will mostly be explaining how viscosupplementation works in my office.

Key Point

Before I go on I would like to clear up one important point. I said that the medication is given for the pain of osteoarthritis of the knee. But it isn't a pain shot. How can that be? A "pain shot" blocks nerve fibers or affects your brain so you don't feel pain for a time. The lubrication injection indirectly treats the cause of the pain by helping your knee to produce its own better lubrication.

Supartz

There are several pharmaceutical companies that make knee lubrication injections. They are similar in ways, but there are subtle differences. In our office we have used many of them over the years, but I have found Supartz to be the most effective one for my patients.

The Supartz program that works best for my patients is to give five injections spaced one week apart. I believe that the potential duration of pain relief is significantly greater with Supartz than with the other preparations.

The Technique

The following is a description of the technique. When the patient comes into the exam room the nurse has them lie down on the exam table and makes them as comfortable as possible. If lying down is not possible due to back trouble the person can sit. I personally give all of the Supartz injections in my office.

1. I examine the knee and determine where the best location is around the front of the knee to inject the Supartz.
2. The site is marked with a small plastic circle.
3. That location is swabbed three times with an iodine solution.
4. The skin is anesthetized with a local anesthetic called Xylocaine. Then I set a clock and wait ten minutes. This insures maximum comfort during injection of the Supartz.
5. If the knee contains joint fluid I remove it by aspiration.
6. Then I inject 2cc of Supartz directly into the knee joint.
7. After removing the needle I wipe off the iodine and apply a small bandage. The patient gets up and applies weight to tolerance.

For any resulting discomfort we advise applying ice for 15 minutes. On the day of injection don't walk more than is necessary, but activities of daily living are O.K.

Follow Up

After the 5th injection I like to make a follow up appointment for 6 weeks. Most patients have begun to experience some relief of knee pain during the injection series. Some don't experience relief for up to 6 weeks or beyond, but almost all get enough relief to make the project worth while.

“Is It For Me?”

If other treatment options have not worked and a total knee replacement is not yet wanted or possible Supartz is probably a good option to relieve pain and stay active. I don't use Supartz in patients allergic to bird proteins, feathers or egg products.

Lastly, I advise against taking oral medications that contain hyaluronic acid because they cannot possibly provide the same benefit as the injected form.

We have now completed our three week mini course on Supartz viscosupplementation for knee arthritis.

As I told you last week, if I figure out how it works, I'll let you know when I'll be going to Sweden to pick up my Nobel Prize!

See you next week.

My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.

Office Website and Gratiot County Herald Archive

What if there was a whole world of musculoskeletal information at one place? There is!

www.orthopodsurgeon.com opens up for you the office website, Your Orthopaedic Connection and the Archive of all previous GCH articles I have written for you, your family and friends.

Please check it out. Do yourself a favor.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush