

Orthopaedic Connection

Supplements For Joints

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Glucosamine and Chondroitin are the two key words associated with almost all joint supplements. But did you know these two substances are naturally present in our own joint cartilage?

Important point!

In this instance when I say joint cartilage I am referring to the stuff that covers the end of all of our movable joints. This is the true cartilage in our joints. I am not referring to what all patients call “the cartilage” in our knee which is the meniscus. It can get confusing.

Most people with arthritis have heard of different joint supplements that are sold over the counter. Lots of people have taken them with varying results.

Why Take a Supplement?

Osteoarthritis is the wearing of the cartilage surface to some degree which causes pain and stiffness. These symptoms are why most patients take joint supplements.

Taking Glucosamine and Chondroitin in a supplement is supposed to relieve joint pain and stiffness by repairing the worn joint surface.

Taking Glucosamine is supposed to help the body repair and improve the damaged joint surface. Chondroitin helps cartilage retain water which is very important for the cartilage to remain healthy and repair itself if worn to some degree.

Why Do I Say Supposed?

If you are reading carefully you picked up on my use of supposed.

Supplements have been around for a long time and have been tested by numerous studies. The studies vary a lot in numbers of patients and degree and type of arthritis. It is extremely hard to design a study of patients that will determine exactly which patients will benefit by taking a supplement.

Some study results have demonstrated benefit (pain relief) to patients with moderate to severe joint pain. Other studies have not shown much improvement.

Is The Joint Surface Repaired or Improved?

This is a very important question that has not been answered conclusively because the study results are mixed. Which study do you chose to believe? Even now the research continues. As time passes improved technology and better techniques and patient selection will give us clearer information.

O.K. Doc, What Should I do?

That is the bottom line. I realize most patients are taking these supplements without any medical advice. Many patients are taking them for conditions that feel like arthritis, but aren't actually true arthritis. On the other side many patients take a supplement for arthritis that is too far advanced for the supplement to help.

I am in a unique position to talk to the patient, examine the joint(s) and view the x-rays, which together allow me to tell someone if a supplement has a chance to help them.

I don't want you to waste your money. But if you are treating yourself you must take Glucosamine 1500mg and Chondroitin 1200mg per day.

If you don't notice a difference in pain and stiffness in three months, it would be correct to discontinue the supplement. If you are benefiting, continue it as long as you feel it is helping. Good luck.

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

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website.

I sincerely appreciate all of you loyal readers and patients present and future and welcome all newcomers!

Besides what you read today there is a huge treasure trove of Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal information at www.orthopodsurgeon.com. It contains the Website Library, Your Orthopaedic Connection and complete archive of every GCH article I have written.

I specialize in you. Be well.

Dr. Haverbush