



Understanding Joint Fluid Therapy



JOINT FLUID THERAPY MAY BE WORTH A SHOT FOR YOUR KNEE PAIN.

Approximately 70 million Americans have arthritis. If you're one of them, you know that pain, stiffness and loss of mobility can interfere with your favorite activities and lead to joint deformity.

The following information was prepared by the orthopedic doctors of Tri Rivers Surgical Associates to help you better understand knee arthritis and how a newer treatment called joint fluid therapy may help.



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Musculoskeletal Medicine*

What is arthritis?

Within the joint, a smooth and slick tissue called cartilage covers the ends of the bones, preventing friction when the bones move against one another. In a properly functioning joint, healthy cartilage allows for pain-free and effortless movement.

Osteoarthritis occurs when the smooth cartilage lining becomes eroded and worn over time or due to overuse or injury. Symptoms include pain, inflammation and stiffness in the joint. Osteoarthritis is one of the most common causes of joint pain. It occurs in many people over age 60 and can become progressively worse, making pain and swelling more difficult to relieve.

All joints in the body are susceptible to osteoarthritis, including the knee, hip, shoulder and finger. Because the knee is a weight-bearing joint, it is one of the most common sites in the body where osteoarthritis develops.

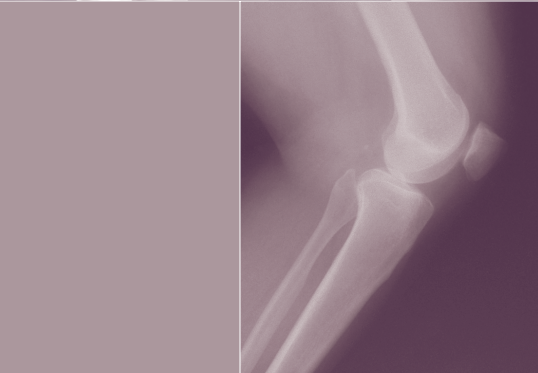
What treatments are available for osteoarthritis of the knee?

There are several non-surgical and surgical therapies used in helping to treat knee arthritis. Non-surgical, or conservative, treatments include: over-the-counter and/or prescription medications; physical therapy and exercise to help strengthen supporting muscles; use of a cane; steroid injections; and joint fluid therapy. Surgical options include arthroscopic surgery and total joint replacement.

What is joint fluid therapy?

Joint fluid therapy is a treatment approved by the Food and Drug Administration to help treat osteoarthritis of the knee. The treatment involves injecting a substance called hyaluronic acid into the affected knee. Hyaluronic acid is similar in composition to synovial fluid — the naturally occurring fluid in the knee. The fluid helps reduce friction from roughened cartilage and cushions the joint, providing long-lasting relief from arthritis pain in many patients.

At this time, joint fluid therapy is only approved to treat osteoarthritis in the knee, though it is being considered for use in other joints.



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How does therapy work and how long before I might notice results?

While undergoing treatment, patients receive five injections over the course of several weeks.

Patients usually notice some relief within the first week or two after their initial injection. The effects typically peak five to nine weeks after treatment and may last for six to 12 months. The therapy can be repeated once a year in most patients.

Are there any side effects?

Serious side effects are rare, but because hyaluronic acid is derived from rooster combs, patients who are allergic to eggs or chickens cannot receive therapy. It's important to tell your doctor if you have any of these allergies.

Will joint fluid therapy cure my osteoarthritis?

The therapy is designed to improve symptoms of osteoarthritis — pain, inflammation and loss of mobility. It does not replace damaged cartilage or repair an arthritic knee. For a more permanent solution to your arthritis, talk to your doctor about total joint replacement or other treatments.

Can joint fluid therapy delay the need for knee replacement surgery?

By reducing symptoms, it may allow a patient to keep his or her own knee a little longer. Many patients are pleased with the pain relief they get from therapy and can enjoy their favorite activities.

Who is a candidate for joint fluid therapy?

The therapy is most effective in patients with mild to moderate osteoarthritis who do not find relief from their joint pain through other conservative treatments. It is often best to receive therapy prior to reaching a severe stage of arthritis, where surgery may become advisable.

I want to learn more.

Joint fluid therapy has given many patients with osteoarthritis of the knee new hope for a pain-free and active life. The physicians of Tri Rivers Surgical are available to help you learn if joint fluid therapy may be right for you. To request more information or to make an appointment with a Tri Rivers physician, please call toll free 1-866-874-7483 or visit www.tririversortho.com.