

Patient Information

PLATELET RICH PLASMA INJECTIONS

Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) injections have been developed as a natural treatment for pain associated with degenerative joint and tendon problems e.g. osteoarthritis and tendinopathies. PRP is a safe and effective treatment. As with any type of injection a small number of people may experience side effects. The information below is a summary to help you understand the procedure and the risks/benefits.

What are PRP injections and how are PRP injections used?

PRP is formed through a process of spinning a small sample of a patient's blood. This spin cycle typically takes 8-10 minutes. Spinning at high speeds in a centrifuge allows for the platelets to be separated from the other constituents of the blood. The PRP produced will contain 3-5 x the normal concentration of platelets. Platelets have been shown to stimulate healing and repair within body tissues.

The blood will be taken at the start of your appointment and then placed into a centrifuge for the spin cycle. Research has consistently demonstrated that PRP has a regenerative effect on the body's tissue through triggering natural healing processes. Ultrasound guidance allows for the accurate delivery of platelets to the exact site of injury. PRP injections are frequently recommended for patients with osteoarthritis of the knees and other joints.

PRP can also be used for soft tissue conditions such as tennis elbow and plantar fasciitis. Most research shows that a series of x 3 PRP injections at 3-4 week intervals provides the best outcome. Therefore you will typically be recommended a x 3 injection treatment protocol.

What happens on the day of the appointment?

Appointments last approximately 45 minutes. Your therapist will explain the procedure in detail to you and answer any questions. A small sample of blood will then be taken from a vein in the arm. The PRP will then be prepared in a centrifuge - taking approximately 10 minutes. An ultrasound scan will then be performed and used to deliver the injection into the exact site of injury. You will be asked to stay in clinic for 20 minutes for routine observations.

What happens after the injection?

It is normal to feel temporarily increased pain for 5-7 days after the injection. This is known as 'post injection flare' and is nothing to be concerned about. It is recommended to have relative rest from strenuous activities for 5-7 days after injection. Injections around tendons can often require 1-2 weeks of relative rest so arrangements should be made for this. Injections around tendons are more likely to have temporary pain after injection. You may wish to consider travel arrangements to and from appointments in case of pain in the tendon or joint making driving impractical.

Can PRP injections be repeated?

Normally most patients will engage in a course of x 3 PRP injections. If you have found good benefits from PRP injections then they can be safely repeated - typically at annual intervals.

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Are there any contra-indications?

Unfortunately we are unable to offer PRP injections to any patient with:

- Haemophiliac disorders
- Joint replacements (if the target for PRP)
- Taking anti-coagulants
- Local infections/taking antibiotics
- Malignancy
- Pregnancy or breast feeding

Can I take other medicines along with the steroid injection?

You can take medicines alongside PRP treatments, however it is recommended that nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID's) such as Ibuprofen or Naproxen are not used for 1 week prior and 3 weeks afterwards. This is because NSAID's may reduce the treatment effect of the PRP.

If you are taking anti-coagulants such as Warfarin then please inform your clinician as the blood could be 'too thin' for injection. The risks of bleeding may also be too high.

Possible risks and side effects

PRP is a very natural treatment and has very little side effects. No reported serious side effects have been reported in the literature.

Other possible side effects include:

- The most common side effect after PRP injection is a temporary increase in joint or tendon pain. This can take 5-10 days to reduce in some cases.
- Infection - this is extremely rare and your therapist is trained to minimise all risks.
- Trauma to local vascular/nerve tissue - your therapist is trained to minimise all risk of tissue injury during the injection however there is a small risk of complications.
- Bruising at site of injection/blood sampling.
- Dizziness and/or nausea at the time or following injection. This is typically very minor and transient.

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