

Orthopaedic Connection

Viscosupplementation

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Aw, and I said I would refrain from using terminology you didn't understand. But, I did it on purpose to get your attention. I have had several people contact me for information about the pain relieving lubrication substance I inject into the knee. Doctors refer to the process in a word - Viscosupplementation.

I'm glad people are asking about it, because it definitely is something important to know about.

Supartz is the "pain relieving lubrication substance" I use in the office. Some refer to it as joint fluid therapy. Same thing.

The very curious among you are asking, "What is it? Where does it come from?" Well,---- are you ready for this? It is made from rooster combs, yep. Stop laughing, I'm serious.

Supartz is a solution made of highly purified sodium hyaluronate (hyaluronan). It is a natural substance found in the body and in joint tissues and fluid that fills the joints. The body's own hyaluronan acts like a lubricant and shock absorber in synovial (joint) fluid in a healthy joint. It is present in many animal tissues, but especially rooster combs. It is practically the same substance that is so important in lubricating our joints.

Arthritis in a joint doesn't let the joint make very good lubrication substance, which is one of many reasons why an arthritic knee hurts. Not the only reason though.

Supartz, which is pretty thick, does not sit in the knee like goo. Rather it causes the knee to make its own more normal lubrication, which protects the knee and relieves pain. There are theories about how this works, but no one knows for sure.

It is not for everybody whose knee hurts and who thinks they have "arthritis". I have pointed out before that arthritis is such an overused term that anything that hurts around a joint is called arthritis. Whether you have true arthritis that Supartz can help can only be determined by a careful history, physical exam and plain knee x-rays done standing. For the most part I feel that Orthopaedic Surgeons such as myself are in the best position to decide if Supartz is indicated in a particular patient.

Who might be helped?

If your knee pain is due to osteoarthritis
If you are not getting adequate pain relief from walking or
physical therapy
If you don't get relief of pain from Advil, Tylenol, Aleve,
Celebrex, etc.

Who should not have joint fluid therapy?

If you are allergic to feathers, eggs or poultry
If you have infection or skin diseases around the knee
If you have had allergic reaction to Supartz or similar material

Looks like we are out of time. There are many other aspects about
Supartz that I will need to cover next week. Can we meet again at the
same time?

For more information about knee arthritis and joint lubrication and
all the other things I treat in the office and hospital log on to
www.orthopodsurgeon.com, which can also take you to Your Orthopaedic Connection.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush