



Glucosamine and Chondroitin Taken For Lower Back Pain

There is currently no evidence that Glucosamine and Chondroitin are effective in treatment for lower back pain. The evidence to date indicates that Glucosamine and Chondroitin are effective in some patients when taken for joint problems in the lower extremities, notably the knee and hip. Please refer to other **Online Orthopaedics** library articles which deal with the treatment of larger lower extremity joints.

There really have not been any studies that have demonstrated that Glucosamine and Chondroitin are effective in the treatment of lower back pain. It would be incorrect to draw conclusions that because treatment with these supplements can be beneficial in the knee and the hip, they would be effective in the treatment of the back.

There have been no studies that would indicate their effectiveness in the treatment of lower back pain. This is not particularly surprising because it is known that Glucosamine and Chondroitin affect the articular cartilage structure of joints. In the back there is very little articular cartilage that goes into the makeup of the back. The only articular cartilage actually is found in the small facet joints which line up in pairs between the vertebrae and are part of what is termed medically the "posterior elements of the spine." These small facet joints are important stabilizing joints in the spine and they do have a certain degree of movement or sliding back and forth on one another. They contribute to the flexibility of the back in bending and straightening the spine. It has been known for many years that facet joints are potent sources of pain when they become damaged or arthritic. They are affected in a major way by wear and tear changes in the discs which are much larger structures positioned in front of the facet joints.

As pointed out in the On Line Orthopaedics article, "Oh my aching back, why do backs hurt?", the spine is an extremely complex structure which has a very large number of areas from which pain can come.

Therefore, even if Glucosamine and Chondroitin did affect the articular cartilage of the facet joints to some degree, this is a very small portion of the spine and only one factor in why the spine can be painful.

We would certainly advise patients to save their money and not take Glucosamine and Chondroitin supplements with the hope that this will improve their lower back pain.

There are many other potentially more effective treatments for lower back pain



Online Orthopaedics

Medical Article



than taking a supplement containing Glucosamine and Chondroitin.

We are often asked whether taking a nutraceutical supplement such as Osteo Bi Flex containing Glucosamine and Chondroitin will have any effect on blood glucose levels.

Despite the similarity between Glucose and Glucosamine research has proven that Glucosamine does not raise blood sugar levels.

Therefore, Glucosamine and Chondroitin can be taken by persons with diabetes without any effect on their blood sugar and without any adjustment in their diet or insulin medication they take. This is important information that our patients need. Without this information persons might avoid taking Glucosamine and Chondroitin fearing that it would effect their blood sugar. This would be unfortunate and not in their best interest. These patients can be assured that it is safe to take Glucosamine and Chondroitin and it will not effect their blood sugar level.



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Please consult Dr. Haverbush or a physician for specific treatment recommendations.

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