

Hyaluronic Acid Injections

Hyaluronic acid (HA) (Durolane, Monovisc, Synvisc), also known as viscosupplementation injections, is used to treat the pain and stiffness, and improve the function of joints that have osteoarthritis. Hyaluronic acid is a naturally occurring molecule that is normally present in healthy joints. In arthritic joints the amount and quality of hyaluronic acid is lower. Studies have shown that injecting HA also stimulates the joint to make more of this important molecule. These injections do not work for everyone, but our experience suggests that these injections help up to 70 - 80% of patients. The maximum effect is noticed up to 6-8 weeks after the injection, but improvement may occur in as little as 2 weeks. Research has demonstrated that the benefit typically lasts about 6 months, but you may experience both shorter and longer symptom improvement. Hyaluronic acid injections work best in mild to moderate arthritis, but we have seen improvement of symptoms in patients with severe Osteoarthritis and research has shown that knee replacement can be delayed for up to 7 years by regularly injecting arthritic knees. These injections can be repeated as often as is necessary in patients who receive benefit. There are no long-term side effects.

The injection procedure is covered by Alberta Health Care, but the cost of the hyaluronic acid product is not. A receipt and prescription will be provided to you in the event that this cost is covered by your private health insurance plan. In very specific situations the injection can be provided on a compassionate basis, for free, by the company who produces the product. Please discuss this with your doctor if you would like to have this injection but are unable to afford it and have no insurance coverage.

In our clinic we perform knee, shoulder and ankle injections; hip and some smaller joint injections must be performed under x-ray or ultrasound guidance at a Radiology (x-ray) clinic.

RISKS OF HA INJECTION

Pain, Swelling and/or Stiffness: Transient pain, swelling and/or stiffness, as well as warmth or redness localized to the joint may occur within 24 hours of the injection and can last for up to 10 days.

Post-injection Inflammatory Reaction: This is an uncommon reaction that occurs in the first day or 2 after the joint is injected with hyaluronic acid. This reaction is characterized by increased swelling and pain in the injected joint. There is usually no redness of the overlying skin, although the joint may feel warm. Icing the area for up to 20 minutes at a time using an ice pack covered with towel can be helpful; do not apply ice directly to your skin. Tylenol (acetaminophen) or an anti-inflammatory such as Advil® (Ibuprofen) or Aleve® (Naproxen) can be used to help control the pain. If the pain and swelling last longer than 7-10 days notify your doctor. This occurs more often after a difficult injection or if the injection is not placed directly into the joint (i.e. into the knee fat pad).

Infection: The risk of infection is extremely low. Studies suggest that the risk of infection after joint injection is about 1/10,000. Signs and symptoms of infection usually occur after around 4 days but can occur up to 10 days after the injection. They include fever and/or chills, as well as pain with motion, warmth and redness of the joint injected. If you develop these symptoms call our office or go to the nearest urgent care or emergency clinic and tell them that you recently had a viscosupplementation injection.

Allergic Reaction: Synvisc is derived from rooster comb, so if you are allergic to poultry products (chicken, eggs, feathers) please inform your doctor. If this is the case you will be offered either Monovisc or Durolane. Unfortunately, 2-10% of the time a joint reaction (see above) can occur regardless of which product you are injected with. Research has demonstrated that these are not allergic reactions; they are believed to be due to the volume of product injected, the location and the difficulty of the injection. If you have had a reaction to viscosupplementation in the past, please notify your doctor prior to your injection.

Other Adverse Effects: Other potential short- and long-term adverse effects include but are not limited to: headache, dizziness, rashes, bleeding, nerve or blood vessel injury. These are very rare. If you have persistent swelling or pain, fever or chills, or if you notice a significant change in your well-being, please contact the clinic at 403-251-9535.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand/accept the risks and benefits of an HA injection.

Date: _____

Signed: _____