

PROLOTHERAPY

Prolotherapy is a safe, effective injection treatment which provides increased strength in joints, ligaments and tendons. It can eliminate even chronic longstanding back, neck and joint pain.

It repairs weakened and torn ligaments by a natural healing mechanism. The body responds to irritation from the proliferant injections by making new connective tissue.

Ligaments are vital for joint stability.

They are bands of tough, fibrous tissue that hold the joints in place. When ligaments are stretched or torn in a car accident, a fall, or from lifting, they often do not heal well due to poor blood supply (unlike bones or muscles) They can also become strained if overstretched constantly, for example, the typist's upper back.

When the ligaments are too loose, the joint slips and slides out of the track it was designed to follow, and the cartilage becomes worn causing **osteoarthritis**.

The goal of prolotherapy is to inject an irritating solution to produce a slight inflammation. This increases the blood supply. Fibroblasts (healing cells) travel to this irritated spot and lay down new fibrous connective tissue (collagen) within and around it, strengthening the ligaments. Over a few months the new tissue remodels and shrinks to fit around the joint. As a result there is increased joint, ligament, and tendon stability, and greater strength. Chronic joint pain is relieved. Surprisingly mobility has been shown to increase. This is because stiffness is often due to protective muscle spasm, and once the pain from the ligaments is relieved the muscles relax.

The technique

The solution contains **20% glucose** which is irritating because it is so strong. A weak solution of lignocaine (**local anaesthetic**) is added. Sometimes stronger solutions are used for a stronger effect. The solution is injected to where the ligament attaches onto the bone. Usually many different points must be injected into various ligaments around the joints to strengthen the whole area.

The local anaesthetic brings relief of pain for a short time. This can be useful diagnostically; especially if there has been some doubt where the pain is coming from. Then inflammation begins - and pain may occur and may last about 2 days. Pain relief is used if necessary.

How many treatments?

A series of 6 or 8 injections are usually necessary for low back pain, 4 - 6 for neck problems, 2 - 3 for upper back, elbow or foot, while the knee is variable. The spacing of the treatments varies from weekly to monthly. Two weeks apart is a good time.

How effective is it?

A success rate of about 88 percent is reported by US doctors for low back pain. An Australian study of very chronic back pain found that 20% became free of pain and over 40% had at least 50% reduction in pain.

What can I do to help?

No aspirin, other anti-inflammatory drugs or liniments should be used for pain relief as they will prevent the inflammatory process that is being encouraged.

For pain relief use paracetamol, dextropropoxyphene or codeine. Ask your pharmacist if in doubt.

Exercises may be necessary to re-educate correct muscle patterns. They can begin immediately or when the pain has decreased. They should not be painful. Ask for the correct ones for you or begin walking.

Nutrients are very important to encourage good health and repair of ligaments and discs and bones and should be taken until three months after the end of treatment.

Vitamin C 1000 - 2000 mg/day (makes strong connective tissue, helps healing).

Manganese (as chelate) 10-20mg/day. (essential for discs, cartilage).

Zinc 15-30mg/day (wound healing, important for new protein).

People who eat lots of vegetables, wholemeal bread, nuts and animal protein will do better than those who eat lots of sweet foods and breakfast cereals and white bread.

Research: 2 other double blind, placebo controlled trials have shown that this treatment is significantly more effective for low back pain than injecting local anaesthetic alone. Many more reports of success have been published for other joints – knees, whiplash neck, fibromyalgia, jaw joint, pubic symphysis, fingers and thumb joints.