

Orthopaedic Connection

Supartz II

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It is hard to cover everything about a subject like Supartz viscosupplementation in one week. I decided to devote another class to Supartz to adequately cover it.

Reasonable Expectations

As I mentioned last time joint fluid therapy is not for everyone. It does not cure arthritis. It probably does not delay the progression of arthritis. Patients with too much arthritis or with bad deformity from the arthritis most likely will not be helped. That's why I like to be the one who decides who probably will be helped by it. I have seen many patients in the office that got the injections elsewhere, but had no chance of benefiting. Persons with gouty arthritis or rheumatoid arthritis should not receive it.

How It Works

Supartz is injected directly into the joint. Supartz adds to the body's cells within the knee joint lining to produce more normal and abundant fluid. Arthritis fluid is watered down so to speak. Supartz is also thought to have some anti-inflammatory properties.

How Long Does It Last?

It varies widely among the patients I see in my office. I have seen it last a few months all the way up to twelve to eighteen months. In some patients it has lasted for years. It is a good option for patients who want to delay or avoid total knee replacement.

Course of Treatment

I have gotten the best results for my patients by using the five injection series. It lasts longer I believe when I do five injections instead of three. It works over time, not immediately, so be patient. It may take eight to ten weeks to begin its effectiveness. Age has no bearing on whether it works. As in all forms of treatment, some patients do not experience any benefit.

Treatment can be repeated in six months if needed. Insurance companies vary in their coverage of joint fluid therapy. Medicare does cover it. Both knees can be injected at the same visit if needed.

Effectiveness

Treatment is more likely to be effective if it is combined with weight loss if necessary, quadriceps strengthening exercise and an aerobic exercise program.

It is reasonable to expect less pain, less stiffness and an improvement in your ability to perform everyday functions such as walking longer distances and climbing stairs with less difficulty.

Viscosupplementation is not new but has become a more common treatment of knee osteoarthritis. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved it for treatment of the knee in 1997.

Since 2006, several studies have proven it to be effective in varying degrees to treat osteoarthritis pain in the hips, ankles and shoulders. Such "off label" use has not been authorized by the FDA, but approval for use in other joints could be coming soon.

I hope you have a better understanding of how I use joint fluid therapy in my practice.

Oh, one last thing. Does it hurt?

No, in 95% of cases. We use a little needle to anesthetize the skin where we will inject the Supartz. We wait ten minutes and then go ahead with the Supartz injection, which you don't feel. A good description of this and pictures are on my website www.orthopodsurgeon.com.

For more information about joint fluid therapy and all the other things I treat in the office and hospital log onto 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