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DIPLOMA IN SPORTS MEDICINE (CASEM)

Viscosupplementation (chondroprotection)

Normal joints produce synovial fluid; a thick and viscous fluid that acts as a protective layer for the joint. An abundance of high-quality hyaluronic acid (HA) in the synovial fluid is responsible for its viscous, protective properties. Degenerative diseases, such as osteoarthritis (OA), engage in a vicious cycle where they impair the production of HA, ultimately leading to further joint degeneration. This cycle occurs because degenerative diseases like OA cause inflammation in the joint. To counteract the inflammation, cartilage cells (chondrocytes) in the affected joint start producing “anti-inflammatory” molecule. Unfortunately, these “anti-inflammatory” molecules reduce the production of quality HA, which leads to increased inflammation and further perpetuates the vicious cycle.

Viscosupplementation treatments put an end to this vicious cycle by injecting HA into the affected joint. Injecting HA into the joint serves to counteract the reduction in natural production of HA that is caused by inflammation. The recovery of normal levels of HA allows the chondrocytes to once again produce high-quality synovial fluid that protects and preserves the cartilage from further damage. Viscosupplementation treatments not only reduce painful swelling and stiffness, but also decrease inflammation in the joint, ultimately slowing down and even stopping the progression of OA.

Frequently Asked Questions

How often do I need to get these injections?

The effects of the viscosupplementation treatment last 6 months. It is recommended that the procedure be repeated every 6 months to ensure full protection of the cartilage.

Are these injections safe?

Visosupplementation injections are safe and approved by the FDA. The injected product has been used all over the world since the 1970s.

Do I have any options to choose from?

Yes. There are different brands of on the market (non-avian versus avian, single versus multiple injections), and there are different costs and possible side effects associated with some of them. Dr. Robert will review the various alternatives with you to help you find the best possible option.