Animas Orthopedic Associates

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Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) Frequently Asked Questions

What is Platelet-Rich Plasma?

Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) is blood plasma with concentrated platelets. The concentrated platelets found in PRP contain huge reservoirs of bioactive proteins, including growth factors, that are vital to initiate and accelerate tissue repair and regeneration. These bioactive proteins initiate connective tissue healing, bone regeneration, and repair, promote development of new blood vessels, and stimulate the wound healing process. PRP injections can now be done under ultrasound guidance or C-arm by trained physicians, for precise localized delivery of these healing factors into injured ligaments, muscles, and joints.

How does PRP therapy work?

Processing patient blood to create PRP increases the concentration of platelets and growth factors up to ten times their normal levels. When PRP is then injected into the damaged area, it stimulates the healing cascade. In arthritic joints, PRP improves the microenvironment of the joint and content within the synovial fluid, which is thought to be the mechanism by which is helps reduce pain so significantly. In patients undergoing injections to tendons or ligaments, PRP is thought to assist in tendon repair.

What are the potential benefits of treatment?

Patients can see a significant improvement in symptoms. This may eliminate the need for more aggressive treatments such as long term medication or surgery, as well as a remarkable return of function.

I've heard of cortisone shots; is this the same?

Studies have shown that cortisone injections may actually weaken tissue. Cortisone shots may provide a quick fix for temporary relief and lessening of inflammation, but can only be done occasionally in order

to avoid these possible negative side effects. Many studies have shown improved outcomes with PRP over steroids in regards to pain relief in addition to the fact that PRP has the potential to improve healing rather than be detrimental to tissues.

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How many treatments & how often is this therapy?

While responses to treatment vary, most people (80-85%) will require only one treatment per problem. While responses to PRP can be slower than that of steroid injections, effects do usually last longer for most areas treated. There is no limit to the number of treatments you can have; the risks and side effects do not change with the number of injections. Please ask your provider about specific recommendations related to PRP treatment frequency depending on your complaints.

Is PRP right for me?

If you have a tendon or ligament injury or osteoarthritis and traditional methods have not provided relief, your clinician can review if PRP therapy may be a good option for you. In general, PRP injections can be helpful for treatment of:

- Shoulders
    - Rotator cuff--partial tears
    - Biceps tendinosis
- Elbows
    - Epicondylitis--medial and lateral--tennis elbow and golfer's elbow
    - Joint arthritis
- Hip/Pelvis/SI joints
    - Greater trochanteric bursitis
    - Hamstring strain
    - Hip joint arthritis
- Knee
    - Patellar tendinitis/tendinosis
    - Quadraceps strain or partial tear
    - Degenerative arthritis
    - Chondromalacia patella
- Ankle & Foot
    - Chronic ligament strains
    - Chronic Achilles tendinosis
    - Plantar fasciitis
- Arthritic joints

Are there any special instructions?

You are restricted from the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) one week prior to the procedure and afterward, generally for 4-8 weeks. Initially the procedure may cause some localized soreness and discomfort. Most patients only require some extra-strength Tylenol to help with the pain. Heat may be applied to the area as needed; ice is generally discouraged. The first week after the procedure, patients will continue their home or physical therapy program, but aggressive physical activity is discouraged. In some instances, physical therapy will be prescribed to bolster the benefits of the PRP treatment.

How soon can I go back to regular physical activities?

PRP therapy helps decrease pain related to pathology in joints, tendons, and ligaments, but it is not a quick fix. This therapy is stimulating healing, which require time and rehabilitation to create change. Return to physical activity is often gradual and will be reviewed in detail by your provider.

Does insurance pay for PRP?

It is best to check with each individual company for each condition/treatment needed. Insurance coverage for PRP, however, is rare. Despite lack of coverage, we encourage patients to undergo PRP when treatments are shown to improve pain, quality of life, and function, allowing you to get back to enjoying the activities you love, pain free.