

Prolotherapy: What is it?

Q: What is Prolotherapy?

A: Prolotherapy also known as regenerative injection therapy, proliferative therapy, ligament reconstruction therapy, and fibro-osseous injection therapy, is a recognized orthopedic procedure that stimulates the body's nature healing processes to strengthen joints and ligaments weakened by traumatic or over-use injury. When ligaments or tendon attachments are stretched, torn, or fragmented, the joints become hypermobile and painful. Traditional approaches with surgery and anti-inflammatory drugs often fail to stabilize the joint and relieve this pain permanently. (Hence, some patients have persistent joint pain after joint replacement.) Prolotherapy, with its unique ability to directly address the cause of the instability, can repair the weakened sites and produce new fibrous tissues, resulting in permanent stabilization of the joint. With a precise injection of a mild irritant solution directly on the site of the torn or stretched ligament or tendon, Prolotherapy creates a mild, controlled injury that stimulates the body's natural healing mechanisms to lay down new tissue on the weakened area. The mild inflammatory response that is created by the injection encourages growth of new ligament or tendon fibers, resulting in a tightening of the weakened structure. Additional treatments repeat this process, allowing a gradual buildup of tissue to restore strength to the area.

Q: What is in the solution that is injected?

A: The prolotherapy injections contain anesthetic agents and natural substances which stimulate the healing response. The primary agent is dextrose (glucose), in a hypertonic solution (high concentration). The dextrose is not significant enough to cause spikes in blood sugar and each syringe is equivalent to about 15 calories, less than a piece of candy.

Q: What areas of the body can be treated?

A: This form of therapy can be used to treat different joints; such as knee, hip, ankle, wrist, elbow and shoulder. In addition, the cervical, thoracic and lumbar spine including the sacroiliac joints can also be treated. Prolotherapy is also successful in the treatment of carpal tunnel syndrome and temporal mandibular joint dysfunction.

Q: How often do I need these treatments? How many?

A: The treatments should be administered every two or three weeks, as determined by your treating physician. Every treatment course varies, but an average treatment is 8, but you may need as many as 12 injection sessions.

Q: What's the rate of success in treatment?

A: The anticipated rate of success depends on a number of variables, including the patient's history and ability to heal, and the type of solution used. In patients with low back pain with hypermobility, 85% to 95% of patients treated experience remission of pain with this form of therapy. In comparison, the Journal of Bone and Joint Therapy reports on a 52% improvement in patients treated surgically for disc involvement.