



PROLOTHERAPY

Prolotherapy (also called sclerosing injections) is an injection-based treatment for chronic musculoskeletal pain that's been in use for over 60 years. Prolotherapy works by prompting your body's natural repair mechanisms to heal injured or weakened joints, ligaments and tendons. It's a natural, non-surgical method of stimulating growth when ligaments or tendons have been stretched, damaged or torn. (Ligaments are the tough tissues that connect bones to one another, while tendons are a similar type of tissue connecting muscles to bones.)

It is a natural non-surgical method of stimulating growth when ligaments or tendons have been stretched/damaged or torn. This technique can be used in most joints that are unstable and it often used for sacroiliac joint dysfunction (the joint that connects the sacrum to the hip bone) with instability or chronic low back pain.

HOW DOES IT WORK

Prolotherapy involves injecting a solution such as dextrose (glucose sugar water) into painful ligament and tendon sites, and/or into adjacent joints.² The solution is safe and water-soluble, which is easily excreted from the body after having the initial desired effect. It works by causing cells to lose water, which leads to a localised inflammatory reaction, stimulating the growth of collagen fibres and connective tissue. This process is thought to thicken, tighten and strengthen the weak tissue, resulting in a stronger tendon or ligament that can hold body structures in place more effectively.

As the weakened area heals, pain is usually reduced or eliminated. This biological process can often take up to six to eight weeks, which explains why you may not feel benefits immediately. A series of three injections are usually given six weeks apart to encourage optimal tissue growth. A local anaesthetic is used to ensure minimal discomfort with the injections. Prolotherapy is often used as an alternative to cortisone injections, which may weaken connective tissue with long term use.³

Although prolotherapy has been used for many years, few controlled studies have properly evaluated the efficacy of this therapy. Most of these studies have been carried out for low back pain in general and have reached contradictory findings.^{2,4-6} Nevertheless, there is good evidence supporting the specific use of prolotherapy around the sacroiliac joint, with one study reporting a functional improvement in 78% of treated patients.⁷ Furthermore, irrespective of the solution, the actual motion of injecting into the ligament has been shown, in some patients, to induce inflammation, resulting in significant long-term pain relief and reduced disability.⁶

SIDE EFFECTS

Due to the local inflammation caused by prolotherapy, some bruising, pain, stiffness and/or swelling in the injected area may occur for the few days following the procedure. If pain persists you should follow up with your doctor.

Apart from a small amount of local bleeding and bruising, other possible side effects for the procedure are uncommon. Infection is rare, and minimised by the use of sterile techniques. Allergic reactions to the injected substances rarely occur.

RECOVERY FROM PROLOTHERAPY

You're likely to be sore for several days following the injections. Soreness after prolotherapy is actually a good thing. It means that an inflammatory reaction is occurring. That's part of your body's natural healing response and should strengthen the ligament. However, if the pain lasts more than a week, please contact your doctor. It's very important that you avoid taking anti-inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen, aspirin, corticosteroids and curcumin (turmeric) during this treatment.



REFERENCES

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