

PRP Injections (Platelet Rich Plasma)

Patient Information

Upper Limb Department



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Tendinopathy (tendon disorder)

Tendinopathy usually occurs in response to a change in load on the tendon. This causes a change in the structure of the tendon which can result in pain. A change in load can be an increase in load, e.g. during a period of DIY, or from repetition of load e.g. gym activities.

PRP Injections

PRP stands for platelet rich plasma. Plasma and platelets along with red and white blood cells make up our blood. Platelets contain our own growth factors which have an ability to aid healing and repair. Injecting these into the tendon aims to promote repair of the damaged and painful tendon.

Are the Injections Effective?

Tendinopathy settles by itself in time. However this can take many months and for most people causes a negative impact on their usual activities. Treatment and advice including a graduated loading exercise programme, can help the problem resolve. For some patients this is not sufficient. Cortico-steroid injections have been used to treat tendinopathy for many years. We now understand that the problem is not of an inflammatory origin and recent clinical trials have suggested that steroid injections may prolong symptoms in the long-term.

Injecting PRP into elbow tendons is a relatively new procedure and is still undergoing research. It is a safe procedure. Early studies demonstrate that it can be effective in resolving tennis elbow. At this stage we are unsure of the long term outcome although research has indicated an 80% success rate with effects maintained for at least two years.

What are the Side Effects or Risks?

The risks of having a PRP injection are low. Your elbow may be sore after the injection. This should be temporary and should resolve within 1 week. It may cause a flare up of your symptoms, again this should be temporary. You may need to take painkillers but must avoid using anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen, aspirin, Diclofenac or Naproxen. The risk of infection is very low. There is a theoretic risk of tendon injury, but this has not been reported.

What are the Alternatives to PRP?

A comprehensive graduated loading exercise programme should improve your symptoms and strength. This takes time. We know that for patients who have had symptoms for over 6 months, it will take 6 months of an exercise programme to resolve your symptoms.

There are alternative injections; these include cortico-steroid injections, or a hyaluron injection. Traditionally steroid injections have been used but recent evidence has raised concerns regarding recurrence of symptoms. Hyalurons have yet to be proven to be effective.

During the Procedure

The injection will be carried out in theatre. You will come to the ward as a day case. In theatre you will remain fully awake throughout and be able to talk to the surgeon and nurses.

A blood sample will be taken from you. This is the same as having a routine blood test. Your blood will then be spun very fast in a machine; this separates the components of the blood. Whilst this is happening, the surgeon will inject small amounts of local anaesthetic around the painful part of your elbow. This will numb the area prior to the main injection. Once your blood has been separated, the platelets are removed from the sample. A small amount is then injected into the painful tendon.

After the injection

When back on the ward a Physiotherapist will see you. You will be shown some exercises that will help the tendon repair. You may be sore following the injection; therefore the Physiotherapist will demonstrate the exercises, and you can start them in 48 hours when the pain has settled.

It is normal to feel sore for a few days following the PRP injection. Whilst your elbow is sore you may take paracetamol to help the pain. It is important that you do not take anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen, aspirin, Naproxen or Diclofenac as these can affect the effect of the PRP injection.

Following Discharge Home

It is important that you do the specific exercises daily, and that you try to rest or avoid aggravating the tendon as much as possible.

Activity Modification

Modifying activities that aggravate your elbow may help ease your symptoms.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends, and carers.

Contact Us

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Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the positives and negatives of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request. For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

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