



# PRAIRIE

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## Information on your Viscosupplementation Injection

### What is viscosupplementation?

Viscosupplementation injections consist of a synthetic lubricant containing hyaluronic acid, an important component of healthy joint cartilage and synovial fluid (the normal fluid within a joint). Sometimes local anesthetic – i.e. “freezing” (usually 1% lidocaine, 0.5% ropivacaine, or 0.25% bupivacaine) is injected as well.

### How does viscosupplementation work?

When a joint wears out and develops arthritis, the levels of hyaluronic acid are lower, and there is more friction and forces within the joint. Viscosupplementation injections help to provide relief by lubricating the joint and functioning as a shock absorber. The injections are most effective when the arthritis present is mild or moderate; they are not as effective when end-stage (i.e. “bone-on-bone”) arthritis is present. There are several different brand names, including Synvisc, Durolane, Neovisc, Monovisc, Orthovisc, etc.

The effects of viscosupplementation can begin to be felt a couple of days after the injection, but usually take up to a week or so. While it is possible that the injection may not work at all, it often provides relief for a duration of up to 6 months. One of the main advantages of viscosupplementation over cortisone is that viscosupplementation can be injected over and over, without worrying about weakening the bones & tendons and damaging the joint (consequences that can occur with multiple or repetitive cortisone injections).

### What do you need to know about your viscosupplementation injection?

The viscosupplementation injection may be performed by your Orthopaedic Surgeon or Sports Medicine Physician, or in some cases by a Radiologist. Sometimes the injection may be performed under image-guidance (i.e. x-ray, ultrasound, or CT) when the joint to be injected is small, difficult to access, or has important structures (i.e. nerves or arteries/veins) in close proximity. The injection is quite safe, but there are a few small **risks (see second page)**. Please notify whoever is performing the injection of any allergies you may have **prior to the injection**. Note that a vasovagal (fainting) episode from the injection is quite rare, however you should ensure you eat breakfast/lunch prior to the injection to minimize this risk.

### Is viscosupplementation covered by Saskatchewan Health Benefits?

Viscosupplementation injections are not covered by Saskatchewan Health Benefits but may be covered by some private insurance plans. The cost of these injections can be found on our website (<https://prairieorthopaedics.com/injections>). Payment in full must be made at the registration desk on the day of your appointment. Payment is by credit card or debit only. Alternatively, you can purchase your

viscosupplementation syringe from a pharmacy (note that a prescription is required) and have it injected by your Orthopaedic Surgeon, Sports Medicine Physician, or Radiologist. If the injection is done at our office, there will still be a cost to cover the supplies required to perform the injection.

### **What are the risks of a viscosupplementation injection?**

The injection is quite safe, but there are a few small risks, including (but not limited to):

- **Pain, Swelling, Stiffness.** It is normal to have a bit of pain, swelling, or stiffness within the first 1-2 days after an injection, due to the injection itself. You may take Tylenol/acetaminophen and/or anti-inflammatories (Advil/ibuprofen, Aleve/naproxen, etc.) if needed.
- **Inflammatory Response.** A small proportion of patients will develop an acute inflammatory reaction to the injection. This usually presents within the first 24 hours of the injection. It is characterized by intense pain, swelling, redness, and warmth. It may look similar to an infection. The difference is that it will generally begin to develop within the first 24 hours after the injection (whereas an infection often takes a few days or so to develop) and generally there will not be fevers (temperature > 37.8°C) or chills. Please notify our office or present to your nearest Hospital/Emergency Department for assessment. The first 5-7 days are the worst, and often require prescription anti-inflammatories and regular Tylenol/acetaminophen. Icing the area 20-30 minutes at a time, several times per day will also help. It generally takes a few weeks to return to baseline.
- **Infection.** This is a concern with any injection into a joint. It is characterized by increased pain/swelling/redness/warmth of the injection site, fevers (temperature > 37.8°C) and/or chills, and generally feeling unwell. This is very serious and could require an operation to wash out the infection in your joint, as well as a period of intravenous antibiotics. It could also permanently damage the joint. Fortunately, it is rare, only occurring in (roughly) 1 in 10,000 injections. Please notify our office or present to the nearest Hospital/Emergency Department urgently for assessment if you think you have developed an infection. Note that an infection will generally (although not always) present 3-10 days after the injection, while an inflammatory response or pain/stiffness/swelling due to the injection itself will occur within the first 24-48 hours.
- **Allergic Reaction.** This is particularly the case if you have an allergy to poultry/avian products and will be receiving a Synvisc injection (as Synvisc contains avian proteins), however you could develop an allergic reaction with any of the different brands of viscosupplementation.
- **Injury** to nerves/artries/veins/cartilage
- **Vasovagal (fainting) episode**

**If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our office.**