

Frequently Asked Questions - PRP

What exactly does platelet rich plasma (PRP) therapy do?

Blood is drawn from your arm and the platelets are concentrated and re-introduced into the site of injury/degeneration. PRP consists of concentrated platelets from your own blood that release chemicals called growth factors or cytokines. They signal to other cells to gather and heal at the site of injury/degeneration. A joint with osteoarthritis has a high rate of apoptosis (death of cells) and the cells that replenish these dead cells are unable to keep up. When these healing cells are introduced into the joint through PRP, this changes the environment of the joint. Your body will start producing more healthy cells that can produce more hyaluronic acid that can cushion the joint and chemicals that stimulate the growth of new blood vessels. All these factors help reduce pain and inflammation and trigger your body's natural healing response which may start to regrow the worn away tissue at the cellular level (typically not enough to be evident on a subsequent medical image).

Will PRP work for me even though I'm "bone on bone"?

Often, the root cause of osteoarthritic pain is from chronic inflammation and PRP is effective in reducing this inflammation. Although studies show that PRP treatment is most effective in cases of mild to moderate osteoarthritis, we have seen good results for patients with end-stage (bone-on-bone) osteoarthritis as well.

What kinds of injuries/diseases do you treat with PRP?

Our team treats any injuries and degenerative diseases, like osteoarthritis that affect the musculoskeletal system. This includes muscles, joints and connective tissue such as tendons and ligaments.

How long will the procedure take?

Approximately thirty minutes.

How long until I will experience pain/symptom relief?

Depending on how you respond you may experience pain relief as soon as a few weeks after treatment. However, most patients notice significant pain relief between 2 and 4 months after the procedure.

How long is the recovery period?

The injected area may become inflamed and more painful than normal for a few days to a week. After this period, your pain should subside to the levels you felt prior to the procedure. Most of our patients start to see a reduction in pain in months 2 or 3 with maximal relief by month 6. Remember, we are using your platelet cells to incite a natural healing response, which takes time.

Is the procedure painful?

People experience varying degrees of discomfort but we endeavour to make you as comfortable as possible. We take a small sample of blood, typically from your arm, just like any time you get lab work done. When we inject the PRP back into you, there is some mild discomfort in the joint space and moderate discomfort if we are injecting into a tendon or bursa.

Am I administered anesthesia?

No, but we can make Entonox (laughing gas) available during the procedure at your request.

How does PRP compare to concentrated bone marrow (BMAC) therapy in terms of success?

When we compare the results of BMAC therapy to similar studies of PRP therapy, the success rate is within 5-10% of each other. The main difference is that a PRP treatment will need to be repeated sooner than BMAC treatments. The average time that PRP lasts is between 9 and 18 months, whereas BMAC treatment can last 3 years or longer.

How do you define if a procedure is successful?

We consider a procedure successful if a patient experiences at least a 50% reduction in pain/symptoms.

Do I need a referral from my doctor?

Yes. A referral is strongly recommended because we want your doctor to be aware of the treatment you are receiving from us. Also, through a referral, your doctor can also provide us with important medical information that can help us deliver better patient care.

If you are unable to get a referral from your doctor, please call the clinic and we can discuss some options with you.

Will I need to schedule a consult before the procedure?

Yes. We require an in-house consult that will take approximately 30 minutes. The consult involves a review of your health history as well as a physical assessment to identify any areas that may benefit from PRP.

I am traveling a long distance; may I schedule a consult and procedure for the same day?

This is possible in some cases. The initial assessment is where we confirm whether you will benefit from the treatment or not so we cannot guarantee that you will be able to proceed with treatment. If you would like to do this, make sure you let the receptionists know and request all the instruction sheets for treatment to ensure that you are following all the guidelines that will give you the best chance of success. We also have discounted rates with the Greenway Inn and Best Western Plus in Lacombe and Microtel Inn & Suites in Blackfalds (10 min. drive) if you plan to stay overnight. Be sure to mention CAPRI Clinic when booking a room.

How long do I have to wait after a cortisone injection?

Cortisone will interfere with PRP therapy, thus, you will have to wait three months after a cortisone injection to receive the therapy.

Can I take anti-inflammatory pain relievers?

We ask that you stay off anti-inflammatory medication (Advil, Aleve, Ibuprofen, Motrin, and Aspirin) one week before and four weeks after the treatment. For this procedure to be effective, we need the inflammation that will take place following the procedure to run its course. Tylenol and Tramadol are OK. If unsure about any of your medications please contact your pharmacist.