

A Patient's Guide to Platelet Rich Plasma Therapy (PRP)

What is platelet rich plasma therapy?

Platelet Rich Plasma therapy, or PRP is a treatment option for non-healing tendon injuries such as tennis elbow, Achilles tendonitis, and knee tendonitis.

How does a PRP procedure work?

Using the patient's own blood, the specially prepared platelet portion is re-injected into the tendon or muscle of the affected area. These platelets release substances known as "growth factors" that lead to tissue healing. For example, when you cut yourself, the body's natural response is to attract platelets that release growth factors and facilitate the healing. By concentrating the platelets, we increase the growth factors up to eight times which promotes the healing of tendons. While other tendon injury treatments such as corticosteroid injections may provide temporary relief and stop inflammation, PRP injections actually heal the tendon over a period of time. The human body has a remarkable ability to heal itself and by re-injecting concentrated platelets we are facilitating the natural healing process.

Is PRP right for me?

Patients should consider PRP treatment if they have been diagnosed with a tendon injury in which conservative treatment such as anti-inflammatories, physical therapy, and bracing have not provided symptomatic relief.

For most patients, PRP offers a solid, alternative treatment for those who do not wish to have surgery. An initial evaluation will determine if PRP is a viable treatment option.

How do I prepare for an injection?

Patients will be scheduled for an evaluation to determine if PRP is a viable treatment option. An MRI may be done prior to the injection to insure a proper diagnosis and that there is not a major tear in the tendon that might best be treated surgically. The PRP injection usually takes an hour and is performed on an outpatient basis.

How do I care for my injection site after treatment?

Initially the procedure may cause some localized soreness and discomfort. Patients may apply ice and elevate as needed. After a few weeks, the patient will likely begin a rehabilitation program with physical therapy. Notify your physician if you have an allergy to Xylocaine or bupivacaine (Marcaine). If you are unsure, contact your primary care physician.

What are potential benefits of PRP treatment?

Patients can expect to see significant improvement in symptoms; elimination of the need for more traditional treatments such as medications, cortisone injections or surgery; and a dramatic return of function.

What are the significant side effects?

Although uncommon, the risks include those signs/symptoms associated with an injection including: pain, infection, no relief of symptoms, worsening of symptoms, blood clot, nerve injury, skin discoloration, calcification, scarring, loss of fat to the affected area, and allergic reaction.

After the injection, if you experience any of the above side effects, please contact the office where you were seen.

How soon can I go back to regular physical activity?

This treatment is not a “quick fix” and is designed to promote long-term healing of the tendon. The process of PRP requires time and rehabilitation to allow the injured tendon to heal.

Through regular followup visits your doctor can determine when you are able to resume regular physical activities.

How is PRP paid?

We do require pre-payment prior to the procedure as this may not be covered by your insurance company.