

New non-surgical therapy keeps young patients on the playing field

As the number one cause of disability in the United States, Osteoarthritis has begun to sideline young, active people who have injured or traumatized joints, especially the knees. Historically targeting older Americans, Osteoarthritis is a disease that causes a deterioration of cartilage in the joints and one that has begun to prey on the young as well.

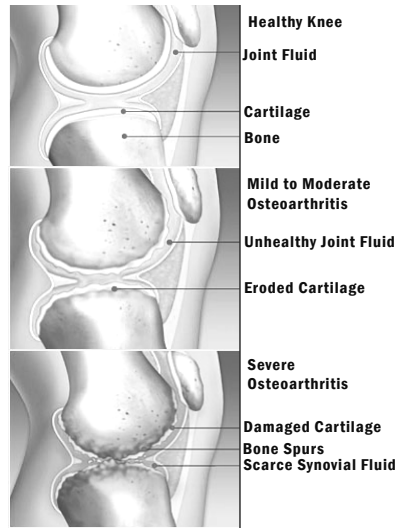
Cartilage is the hard slippery tissue that protects the ends of bones and helps joints move smoothly. As the cartilage breaks down, the surface becomes pitted and bumpy. The result is increased friction which causes inflammation. Osteoarthritis can affect any joint, but weight bearing joints such as the knee commonly are more painful. A chronic disease, it can be managed through a range of treatment options, with early treatment actually slowing the progression of the disease.

Symptoms include joint pain and stiffness after periods of rest or with excessive activity, loss of normal shape due to swelling and/or bone spurs, and sensations of weak or wobbly joints due to muscle weakness and pain.

For patients who are medically unfit for total joint replacement, who do not wish to have major surgery, or who are too young for consideration of total joint replacement, other treatments until now included physical therapy, medications, braces and sometimes small incision surgical procedures.

With the introduction of a new procedure, Visco-supplementation, Memphis Orthopaedic physicians and their young patients now have another option.

The procedure involves the injection of hyaluronic acid into the knee joint. Hyaluronic acid is a naturally occurring substance found in synovial (joint) fluid. There are several options for visco-supplementation available, which are FDA-approved non-drug therapies. The injectable hyaluronic acid is derived from rooster combs (the crown feathers on a rooster's head) or bacterial cultures.



How does it work? Hyaluronic acid acts as a lubricant that enables bones to move smoothly over each other and as a shock absorber for joint loads. The injections also provide anti-inflammatory relief, which means they further ease the knee pain and slow cartilage deterioration. The material often diminishes pain and improves motion and the results can last for months, possibly stimulating the body to produce its own thicker hyaluronic acid characteristic of younger joints.

John Lochemes, M.D. is a board certified orthopaedic surgeon and has been practicing with Memphis Orthopaedic Group for 12 years. He completed his specialty training at the Campbell Clinic in 1993. Dr. Lochemes focuses on rapid and safe return to maximum function by individualizing the care of each patient and developing a safe, acute injury management plan to shave the patient's recovery time. He practices at all four MOG locations and can often work patients in the same or next day.

