**Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP)**

**Common Questions**

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**More information can be found on**

**Dr. Stetson’s website at** [**www.sportsmedicinedr.com**](http://www.sportsmedicinedr.com)

**WHAT ARE PLATELETS?**

Platelets are cell fragments found in blood that have several roles in your body. Platelets are most commonly known to assist in clotting blood. They also play a role in your body’s reparative processes. Platelet rich plasma, or PRP, is made up of high concentrations of platelets and growth factors from your own body. PRP can promote healing.

**WHAT IS PLATELET RICH PLASMA (PRP)?**

Platelet rich plasma is also known as PRP. Blood is mainly a liquid which is called plasma and plasma contains small components such as red blood cells, white blood cells and another component called platelets.

Platelets are cell fragments found in blood that have several roles in your body and are most commonly known to assist in clotting blood. They also contain hundreds of proteins which are called growth factors that can promote healing.

Platelet rich plasma or what is commonly referred to as PRP, is made up of high concentrations of platelets from your own body. When injected into areas of inflammation or tissue damage, PRP can promote healing.

**WHAT IS PRP USED FOR?**

It is used for a wide variety of clinical applications including a number of orthopedic conditions such as tendonitis and osteoarthritis. PRP is often considered when other treatment options have failed such as rest,

anti-inflammatory medications, ice, activity modification, and physical therapy. An injection of PRP is known to decrease inflammation and may reduce cartilage degeneration in the knee and other joints.

**HOW DO PRP WORK?**

The exact way that PRP works is still unclear and under scientific investigation. Laboratory and some clinical studies have shown that PRP may potentially speed up the healing process because of the high concentration of growth factors present in PRP.

**HOW IS A PRP INJECTION DONE?**

A PRP injection can easily be done in the office with minimal downtime following the injection. First, a simple blood draw is performed in the office. This syringe is placed into a centrifuge and is spun for approximately 5 minutes. This step separates the platelets from the other components of blood that will be discarded. The PRP is then injected into the affected area.

Some studies have shown that possibly 2-3 injections can be more beneficial than just one, but more research needs to be done. This can be done once weekly for a total of two to three weeks.

**WHAT CONDITIONS ARE TREATED WITH PRP?**

Research studies are currently being done to evaluate the effectiveness of PRP treatment for many different orthopaedic injuries. Early studies have shown that PRP can be effective in treating certain tendon problems such as tennis elbow, patellar tendinitis, osteoarthritis, and some acute ligament and muscle injuries. Further research needs to be done before we know what conditions are best treated with PRP.

**IS PRP EVER USED DURING SURGERY?**

Recent studies have shown that PRP may be effective during certain types of surgery to help tissues heal faster. Some studies have shown a better healing rate when used at the time of rotator cuff surgery but more recent needs to be done before it can be recommended for all types of shoulder surgery.

**IS PRP EVER USED FOR FRACTURES?**

Current research is being done to see if PRP can help fractures heal better and faster. So far the research has not shown any benefit but more research is being done.

**WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS OF PRP?**

Every treatment or medication can have side effects and PRP is no different. However, the side effects of PRP injections are usually mild and temporary and may include swelling, bruising, or pain at the injection site.

Because the PRP is your own blood, other potential side effects are not very common. With any type of injection, infection is always the biggest concern so if the injection site becomes red, notify your doctor right away.

**IS PRP SAFE?**

PRP is generally considered safe since it uses the patient's own blood, reducing the risk of allergic reactions. However, as with any medical procedure, there are potential risks, and it's important to discuss them with your healthcare provider.

**IS PRP PAINFUL?**

PRP does require blood to be drawn from your arm or hand and so that can be uncomfortable. The PRP injection may cause some pain where it is injected but local anesthesia may be used to minimize pain during the procedure.

**HOW LONG DOES A PRP SESSION TAKE?**

The entire PRP procedure, from blood draw to injection, typically takes at least about 30 minutes but may take up to one hour. The injection itself is relatively quick but time is spent preparing your blood for the injection.

**IS PRP SAFE DURING PREGNANCY?**

The safety of using PRP during pregnancy has not been investigated but the fact that it is your own blood, most healthcare professionals feel the risk is very low. However, it is important for you to discuss the potential risks and benefits with your doctor or healthcare professional to make informed decisions about treatment.

**HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR PRP TO WORK?**

The time it takes for PRP to start working can vary depending on what is being treated. Some individuals may experience improvement relatively quickly, while for others, it may take several weeks or months.

**WHAT IS THE RECOVERY TIME AFTER PRP THERAPY?**

Recovery time after a PRP is generally shorter compared to surgical procedures. Patients may experience some initial soreness at the injection site, but they can typically resume normal activities within a few days.

**DOES INSURANCE COVER PRP THERAPY?**

Insurance coverage for PRP therapy can vary. Since it is often considered an elective procedure, patients should check with their insurance provider to determine coverage. As further research is done, PRP should start to be covered by more insurance companies.

**IS PRP EXPENSIVE?**

Yes, PRP can be expensive as it is a new treatment and most insurance companies do not cover the cost of the procedure. The cost can vary as there are different techniques that are used, and the preparation kits can also vary in price. As more research is done and its effectiveness is proven, it may be covered by more insurance companies. However, for now, it is still considered experimental by many insurance companies, and they are unwilling to pay for it.

**CAN PRP BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH OTHER TREATMENTS?**

PRP can be used with other treatments and may work better if used with other treatments, depending on the condition. More research is being done to see how PRP can be used with other types of treatment.

**HOW IS PRP DIFFERENT FROM TRADITIONAL DRUGS?**

PRP is very different from traditional drugs because it is like super charging your own body with its own blood to help naturally treat your body. This is a new frontier in medicine and much more work needs to be done but the future is promising for this type of treatment. Traditional drugs are usually made synthetically through chemical processes and although useful, do not cure everything so that is why PRP is felt to have so much potential.

**IS PRP REGULATED?**

Because PRP is your own blood, it is not regulated by the health authorities, such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. It is not allowed to be manipulated in any significant way and if is, it requires significantly more testing for safety and efficacy before receiving approval for use.

**ARE THERE ANY LONG-TERM RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH USING PRP?**

The long-term risks of PRP use are really unknown but because it is your own blood, it is felt by most doctors and researchers not to have any significant long term risk. Further research studies are currently being done but as of now, the risks appear to be very small.

**HOW MANY PRP SESSIONS ARE NEEDED?**

The number of sessions can vary depending on the condition being treated and individual response. Some patients may experience improvement after one session, while others may require multiple sessions spaced over weeks or months.

**WHO IS A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR PRP?**

Good candidates for PRP therapy are individuals with musculoskeletal injuries or conditions that have not responded well to conventional treatments. However, not everyone is a suitable candidate, and the decision should be made in consultation with your doctor or healthcare provider.

**HOW EFFECTIVE IS PRP TREATMENT?**

The effectiveness of PRP treatment can vary based on the condition being treated, and many other factors that are currently being investigated. PRP treatments have shown promising results in clinical trials, while others are still under investigation.

**WHAT IF I HAVE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?**

If you have any other questions, more information can be found on Dr. Stetson’s website at [www.sportsmedicinedr.com](http://www.sportsmedicinedr.com) or just call Dr. Stetson’s office, we are always happy to answer any questions you may have.

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