

## Musculoskeletal Vitamin Supplements

David Rosania, M.D.

Did you ever wonder if there is a legitimate alternative to prescription medication for prevention or treatment of muscle or joint pain? With all the products on the market today claiming that they can help decrease everything from knee pain to generate new cartilage, it can be very confusing to understand which is the right pill for your condition.

By far, the most asked about musculoskeletal supplements are Glucosamine and Chondroitin.

The goal of Glucosamine is to halt the destruction of cartilage in the joints. Such breakdown of the joint cartilage that protects bone is what causes the customary osteoarthritic pain that millions of patients suffer from. Chondroitin, on the other hand, works to combat inflammation and protect the joint from damaging enzymes that interfere with cartilage.

However, a National Institute of Health multi-central study of 1600 osteoarthritis patient completed in early 2006 exhibited conflicting results of the true benefits of these two supplements in comparison with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication. Over 270 patients enlisted in the study with moderate to severe pain reported at least some relief with the combination of glucosamine and chondroitin.

These supplements are sold over the counter; however, they are not entirely innocuous to all patients. For example, patients with shellfish allergies are advised to avoid glucosamine. Also, patients on blood-thinning medications, (i.e. Coumadin and Heparin), have to carefully monitor their clotting times as they are at an increased risk for bleeding.

Recently, a Consumer Reports article evaluated quality control and overall value of various Glucosamine and Chondroitin manufacturers. They found that Kirkland Signature (Costco), Spring Valley (Wal-Mart), Triple Strength Glucosamine and Chondroitin Complex (Target), Vitamin World, and Vitasmart (Kmart) offer the best value for the money (less than 50 cents per day).

Glucosamine and Chondroitin should be dosed at a minimum of 1200mg/day to have any useful affect. They do not provide acute anti-inflammatory effects to muscle and should not be substituted for a prescribed anti-inflammatory medication or an outpatient physical therapy regimen

*Dr. David Rosania is a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician in private practice in Chicago, Il.  
He can be reached at 312—332-5108*