

Yelverton Glucosamine Prescribing Policy

It is practice policy at Yelverton Surgery not to prescribe glucosamine products.

What is glucosamine?

Glucosamine occurs naturally in the body and has an important role in the maintenance of cartilage and joint lubrication.

It has been suggested that oral supplementation of glucosamine may be of benefit to people who suffer from arthritis in their joints.

Glucosamine is available from pharmacies, supermarkets and health-food shops as it is not considered a medication. However, people sometimes ask their doctor to prescribe it for them. At Yelverton Surgery, it is our practice policy NOT to prescribe glucosamine.

Why is glucosamine not prescribed at Yelverton Surgery?

Glucosamine has been the subject of a number of clinical trial and the outcomes suggests that glucosamine may be of benefit to patients with arthritis in their knees. Some patients have experienced benefits, for example, a reduction in pain, however, there was no improvement or delay in the onset or progression of the arthritis itself.

The trials involved only small numbers of patients and did not look at other joints such as hips. As a result, there is insufficient evidence to prove that it works. It is for this reason that local and national guidelines do not support the prescribing of glucosamine through the NHS, which is reflected in our practice policy.

I suffer from arthritis. What should I use to manage the pain?

Patients suffering pain from arthritis of the joints can improve their symptoms through lifestyle modification such as gentle exercise.

Where movement of the joint is painful, pain relief should be approached through an 'analgesic ladder':-

- Step 1: Paracetamol – use regularly 4 times a day
- Step 2: Add an anti-inflammatory rub (e.g. ibuprofen 5% gel)
- Step 3: Try an anti-inflammatory tablet (e.g. ibuprofen 400mg)

These medications are available from pharmacies or on prescription. If you take any other medications or have an existing medical condition, please consult your pharmacist or doctor before trying any new medications.

I'd like to try glucosamine. Where can I get it from?

Glucosamine is available from most pharmacies, supermarkets and health-food shops. It is generally well tolerated with stomach upset being the most common side effect. It is important to check the strength and dosage of the tablets you buy – to make the most from the glucosamine you should take 1500mg each day. You will probably need to take it for 4-6 weeks before you notice any pain relief. If after this time you notice no improvement in your symptoms you may wish to consider stopping. It can also be bought cheaply from mail order companies such as Goldshield (www.goldshield.co.uk).