

Position statement on the prescribing of glucosamine

SW London CCGs* do not recommend the routine prescribing of glucosamine (and chondroitin) for any indication, in line with NHS England's national guidance on medicines which should no longer be routinely prescribed

Rationale

- Glucosamine is a food supplement sometimes used to relieve pain and symptoms associated with osteoarthritis and other joint disorders. Supplements are available without prescription from a variety of pharmacies and health food shops.
- A review of a combination of studies by the British Medical Journal found that glucosamine, chondroitin and the two in combination, do not reduce joint pain.¹ This supports national guidance on treating osteoarthritis and the advice to not prescribe glucosamine or chondroitin products on NHS prescriptions.²
- In 2014, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) states: Do not offer glucosamine or chondroitin products for the management of osteoarthritis.²
- The Midlands Therapeutics Review and Advisory Committee (MTRAC) and the Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) have reviewed the use of glucosamine products and do not recommend the routine prescribing of these products.^{2,7,8}
- A meta-analysis was published in the BMJ (2010) to determine the effect of glucosamine, chondroitin, or the two in combination on joint pain and on radiological progression of disease in osteoarthritis of the hip or knee. This meta-analysis found that compared with placebo, glucosamine, chondroitin, or their combination do not reduce joint pain or have an impact on narrowing of joint space.¹ The clinical evidence for its efficacy is inconsistent, and not convincing, in spite of many randomised clinical trials.¹
- There is no evidence that chondroitin offers any significant benefit.^{3,4,5,6}
- On this basis it is recommended that clinicians **do not** prescribe glucosamine and chondroitin products on NHS prescriptions.

References

1. Wandel et al. Effects of glucosamine, chondroitin, or placebo in patients with osteoarthritis of hip or knee: network meta-analysis [BMJ 2010; 341:c4675. September 2010.](#)
2. NICE. CG 177 Osteoarthritis: Care and Management in Adults. February 2014. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg177>
3. Clegg DO and others. Glucosamine, chondroitin sulfate, and the two in combination for painful knee osteoarthritis. [New England Journal of Medicine 354:795-808, 2006.](#)
4. Hochberg MC. Nutritional supplements for knee osteoarthritis—Still no resolution. [New England Journal of Medicine 354:848-850, 2006.](#)
5. Sawitzke AD and others. The effect of glucosamine and/or chondroitin sulfate on the progression of knee osteoarthritis: A report from the Glucosamine/chondroitin Arthritis Intervention Trial. [Arthritis & Rheumatism 58:3183-3191, 2008.](#)
6. Reichenbach S, and others. Meta-analysis: chondroitin for osteoarthritis of the knee or hip. [Annals of Internal Medicine 146:580-590, 2007.](#)
7. MTRAC. Verdict and Summary- Glucosamine. <http://195.62.199.219/pctsla/mtrac/productinfo/verdicts/G/Glucosamine.pdf>
8. SMC .Scottish Medicines Consortium – [Glucosamine reviews](#)

Further information available from:

- NHS England. Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/items-which-should-not-be-routinely-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs/>. Updated November 2017.

*SWL CCGs (NHS Croydon CCG, NHS Kingston CCG, NHS Merton CCG, NHS Richmond CCG, NHS Sutton CCG and NHS Wandsworth CCG)
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Guidance for clinicians on the prescribing of glucosamine

Recommendations:

- No new patients should be started on glucosamine.
- Review existing patients on glucosamine and ask patients to purchase future supplies.

Guidance for patients, carers and guardians on obtaining glucosamine

- If you wish to start or continue glucosamine, this can be purchased over-the-counter i.e. without prescription, from a variety of pharmacies and health food shops.
- Seek advice from your local community pharmacist on potential interactions with other medications you may be taking.

A patient information leaflet is available: <https://www.prescgipp.info/items-which-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-patient-leaflets>

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