



Eytan Debbi, MD, PhD

Kyle Peterson, MS, PA-C

Hip & Knee Replacement · Hospital for Special Surgery

535 E 70th St, 9th Floor, New York, NY 10021
1133 Westchester Avenue, White Plains, NY 10065

TEL 212.606.1408 FAX 917.260.3808

hss.edu/debbi · edebbi.com

PATIENT GUIDE

Hyaluronic Acid (Gel) Injection

Also called viscosupplementation. How to prepare for your knee or hip injection — and how to care for yourself afterward.

What is a hyaluronic acid injection?

Hyaluronic acid (HA) is a **gel-like fluid similar to the natural lubricant** already in your joints. We inject it into your knee or hip — usually with ultrasound guidance — to **cushion the joint, improve gliding, and ease arthritis pain**. Depending on the product, this is given as a **single injection or a short series** (often 3 weekly injections). The visit usually takes about 15–30 minutes.

Before Your Injection

There is very little special preparation needed for an HA injection.

- Keep taking your usual medicines**, including NSAIDs (ibuprofen, Aleve) and your prescriptions, unless we tell you otherwise.
- Tell us about allergies.** Some HA products are made from avian (bird/egg) sources — let us know if you have an egg or poultry allergy so we choose the right one.
- On blood thinners?** Tell us in advance (warfarin/Coumadin, Eliquis, Xarelto, Plavix). **Do not stop them on your own.**
- Tell us if you feel unwell** or think you may have an infection, or if the skin over the joint is broken — we may reschedule.
- Eat normally** beforehand and **wear loose clothing** that lets us reach your knee or hip easily.
- If this is a series**, plan to keep all of your scheduled visits, usually one week apart, for the best result.

Medications

Unlike PRP, HA does **not** require you to stop anti-inflammatory medicines.

Medication	What to do	Notes
NSAIDs ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve), meloxicam (Mobic), celecoxib (Celebrex)	OK to continue	Helpful for soreness afterward
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	OK for pain	before & after
Blood thinners warfarin, Eliquis, Xarelto, Plavix, daily cardiac aspirin	Do not stop — call us	Tell us in advance

When in doubt about any medicine, call our office before stopping or starting it.

The Day of Your Injection

- Eat normally and take your usual medicines. No fasting is needed.
- If there is extra fluid in the joint, we may **remove some first** before injecting the gel.
- We clean the skin and inject the HA gel, using ultrasound to guide the needle precisely.
- Expect a brief pinch and a feeling of fullness in the joint. Mild soreness afterward is normal.
- **Avoid strenuous activity** — running, heavy lifting, prolonged standing — for **48 hours**. Most patients drive themselves home.

After Your Injection — What to Expect

HA works gradually as it restores cushioning in the joint — it is not an instant fix.

Days 0–2 · Rest the joint

Mild soreness, warmth, or a feeling of fullness is common. Rest, ice for comfort (15–20 min), and you may use **NSAIDs or Tylenol** for pain. Avoid strenuous activity and prolonged standing for 48 hours.

Days 3–7 · Ease back in

Soreness settles. Resume normal everyday activity. If you are receiving a series, keep your next scheduled appointment.

Weeks 4–12 · Benefit builds

Pain relief develops gradually over several weeks, often reaching its **peak around 8–12 weeks**, and can last about **6 months**.

When to Expect Results

- HA works **gradually** — this is not an instant fix.
- Many patients notice improvement over **4–8 weeks**, with peak benefit around **8–12 weeks**.
- Relief commonly lasts about **6 months**, and varies from person to person.
- The course can be **repeated** when the benefit fades. We'll discuss timing with you.

When to Call Us

Mild soreness for a day or two is normal. Contact our office if you notice any of the following:

- × Fever above **101°F (38.3°C)** or chills.
- × **Marked swelling, redness, or warmth** that builds over the first day or two (an uncommon local reaction).
- × Drainage or pus at the injection site.
- × Severe or worsening pain that lasts **beyond 2–3 days**.

Call 911 for chest pain, shortness of breath, or calf pain and swelling.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does it hurt?

You'll feel a brief pinch and a sense of fullness. Any soreness usually settles within a day or two.

How many injections will I need?

It depends on the product — either a single injection or a series of about 3, given one week apart. We'll tell you which.

Can I take ibuprofen?

Yes. Unlike PRP, HA does not require stopping NSAIDs. They can help with soreness afterward.

When can I shower?

Keep the bandage dry for 24 hours, then you may shower. Avoid baths, pools, and hot tubs for 48 hours.

When can I return to activity?

Avoid strenuous activity for 48 hours, then ease back to normal. Desk work is usually fine the same or next day.

Is HA made from animal products?

Some products are; others are made without them. Tell us about any egg or poultry allergy so we choose the right one for you.

Questions? We're here to help.

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This guide is general information for patients of our practice and does not replace your provider's specific instructions. If your instructions differ from this handout, follow what your care team has told you.