

Chondroitin and Pain Relief

Background:

A new study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine finds the supplement chondroitin does not prevent or reduce knee or hip pain from osteoarthritis any better than placebo. Researchers conducted an extensive literature search and selected 20 trials which included comparing chondroitin to either placebo or no treatment. Although few adverse side effects were reported, the authors conclude that chondroitin use should be discouraged.

Chondroitin is a cartilage extract that is usually sold in the United States in combination with glucosamine, an amino sugar. It is widely available in drug and health stores and online for treatment of joint pain.

Comment:

“This analysis of existing data confirms that chondroitin provides little or no pain relief for most people with established osteoarthritis,” said Dr. John Hardin, M.D., chief scientific officer for the Arthritis Foundation. “Chondroitin can be used safely but it is unlikely to provide any benefit for patients whose joints have already suffered damage from osteoarthritis. Supplements are just one potential component of a comprehensive, individualized treatment plan for osteoarthritis which may include exercise and physical therapy, weight loss, medication and surgery. People suffering from painful joints should work closely with their physicians to determine the best, individualized treatment options.”