

Hyaluronic acid injections for osteoarthritis of the knee

Numbers for people with osteoarthritis of the knee who received either a placebo or a hyaluronic acid injection in the impaired knee (intra-articular injection). Patients were observed for 3 weeks to 34 months.

	Placebo injection	Hyaluronic acid injection
Benefits		
Did hyaluronic acid injections reduce knee pain?		5 out of 10 studies* show that hyaluronic acid injections may reduce pain. 5 out of 10 studies* show either no or no clinically relevant difference between placebo and hyaluronic acid injections.
Did hyaluronic acid injections improve function of the knee joint?		4 out of 10 studies* show that hyaluronic acid injections may improve function of the knee joint. 6 out of 10 studies* show either no or no clinically relevant difference between placebo and hyaluronic acid injections.
Harms**		
How often did joint pain, swelling, and stiffness occur as side effects?		no difference

*The information is based on studies that summarize statistical analyses of several studies (meta-analyses).

**It is not known how many patients would have suffered side effects if no placebo injections had been given.

Short summary: Hyaluronic acid injections can be considered a treatment option for osteoarthritis of the knee. They led to a slight reduction in pain and improvement in function of the knee joint for up to 26 weeks. Joint pain, swelling, and stiffness appeared equally often in both groups.

Sources: [1] Campbell et al. *Arthroscopy* 2015;31(10):2036-45.e14. [2] Trojian et al. *Br J Sports Med* 2016;50(2):84-92.