

Glucosamine

We are constantly reviewing prescriptions to ensure that patients get the best, most cost-effective, evidence-based treatment available.

Your GP may have decided to stop your repeat prescription of glucosamine or glucosamine & chondroitin or they may have advised that, should you require glucosamine you may purchase it over the counter from a local pharmacy.

This leaflet gives a brief background into the use of glucosamine and why it should not be prescribed on an NHS prescription.

What is glucosamine?

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.

Glucosamine is available in two forms, either glucosamine sulphate or glucosamine hydrochloride.

Glucosamine is sometimes combined with chondroitin, however this is not recommended as there is no evidence that this combination is effective.

Does glucosamine work?

The evidence supporting the effectiveness of glucosamine is mixed and very limited. Some large trials have demonstrated moderate benefits, whilst others have not provided evidence of any benefit from continued use of glucosamine. Some trials have found glucosamine to be no better than taking a placebo (a substance with no effect).

Is glucosamine safe?

Studies on the safety of glucosamine are also limited. This is because most studies have been conducted over a short period of time and therefore the long term effects of continued use of glucosamine cannot be assured.

- ◆ Glucosamine may affect blood sugar, therefore monitoring is advised for patients with diabetes.
- ◆ Patients with asthma or an allergy to shellfish should avoid glucosamine because it is made from shellfish
- ◆ Glucosamine should be avoided in pregnancy and breastfeeding
- ◆ Glucosamine should be avoided if taking warfarin as it may affect blood clotting.
- ◆ Glucosamine may decrease the effectiveness of some anti-cancer drugs

Are there any side effects?

Side effects can be mild and include nausea, heartburn, diarrhoea and constipation.

Why can't I get glucosamine on an NHS prescription?

A review of a combination of studies by the British Medical Journal (September 2010) found that glucosamine, chondroitin and the two in combination, do not reduce joint

pain. This supports national guidance on osteoarthritis and the advice against prescribing glucosamine or chondroitin products on NHS prescriptions. In 2014, the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) found insufficient evidence that glucosamine alters the disease process.

On the basis of this information your general practice has decided to review all patients who are currently using these preparations, with the view to cease the prescribing of glucosamine in line with national guidance and the current evidence.

On this basis we cannot recommend that GPs prescribe glucosamine products on NHS prescriptions.

I still want to try or continue glucosamine. What do I do?

The only potential benefits so far identified with glucosamine are with glucosamine sulphate 1500mg/day.

Patients wishing to continue therapy, glucosamine can be purchased over-the-counter.

If glucosamine has been recommended and you wish to start therapy, your GP will advise you on how to perform your own trial of therapy with an over-the-counter product. They will help you to evaluate your pain before starting glucosamine and help review the benefits of glucosamine after three months.

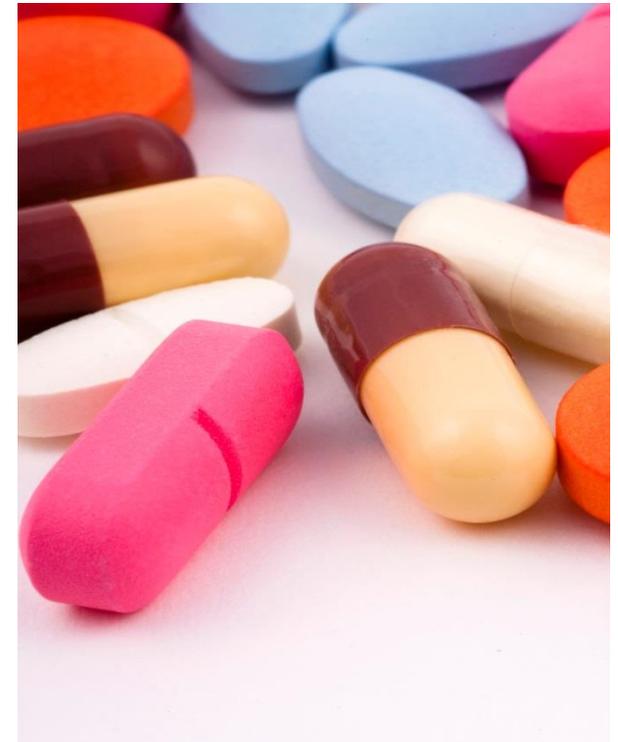
Seek advice from your local pharmacy because of potential interactions with other medications you may be taking.

Key points

- ◆ Preparations containing glucosamine for the treatment of osteoarthritis are not recommended for prescribing in the NHS due to lack of supporting evidence.
- ◆ Your GP will advise you on how to obtain glucosamine over-the-counter and how to perform your own trial of therapy.

Acknowledgment to NHS Camden & NHS Ealing
Adapted for use within SW London CCGs*

Glucosamine and chondroitin products



* SWL CCGs (NHS Croydon CCG, NHS Kingston CCG, NHS Merton CCG, NHS Richmond CCG, NHS Sutton CCG and NHS Wandsworth CCG)