Position statement on the prescribing of glucosamine

SW London CCGs* do not recommend the routine prescribing of glucosamine (and chondroitin) for any indication.

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. This supports national guidance on treating osteoarthritis and the advice to not prescribe glucosamine or chondroitin products on NHS prescriptions.  
- In 2014, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) states: Do not offer glucosamine or chondroitin products for the management of osteoarthritis.
- 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.
- 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. The clinical evidence for its efficacy is inconsistent, and not convincing, in spite of many randomised clinical trials.
- There is no evidence that chondroitin offers any significant benefit.
- On this basis it is recommended that clinicians do not prescribe glucosamine and chondroitin products on NHS prescriptions.

References

2. NICE. CG 177 Osteoarthritis: Care and Management in Adults. February 2014. https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg177
8. SMC .Scottish Medicines Consortium – Glucosamine reviews

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

Recommendations:

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.

The NHS belongs to YOU, use it responsibly