

Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) Therapy: Patient Guide

What is Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP)?

While your blood is mostly a liquid called plasma, it also contains tiny solid parts: red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. Platelets are best known for helping your blood clot, but they also contain hundreds of natural proteins called **growth factors**. These growth factors play a crucial role in healing injuries and reducing inflammation.

A PRP injection delivers a highly concentrated dose of these platelets directly to your injured joint or tendon. The concentration of platelets in PRP can be **5 to 10 times higher** than what is normally found in your blood.

How is the procedure performed?

PRP is a straightforward, in-office procedure that takes about 30 to 45 minutes:

1. **The Blood Draw:** We draw a small amount of blood from your arm (similar to a standard lab test).
2. **Centrifugation:** Your blood is placed into a specialized machine called a centrifuge, which spins it at high speeds. This separates the healing platelets and plasma from the rest of your blood cells.
3. **The Injection:** The concentrated platelet mixture is collected into a syringe and carefully injected into the targeted joint or tendon, often using ultrasound guidance for precise placement.

What conditions can PRP treat?

Orthopedic clinical evidence shows varying degrees of success depending on the area treated:

Knee Osteoarthritis: Current clinical guidelines (including the AAOS) note that PRP can be effective in reducing pain and improving daily function for mild-to-moderate knee arthritis.

Chronic Tendon Injuries: PRP has shown strong success rates for chronic tendon issues, particularly tennis elbow (lateral epicondylitis). It is also frequently utilized for the Achilles and patellar tendons.

Other Joints/Tissue: Research is ongoing for hip, shoulder, and ligament issues, though clinical results vary by individual.

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What are the risks and side effects?

Because PRP is autologous (made from **your own blood**), the risk of an allergic reaction or disease transmission is virtually zero. The side effects are minimal and similar to any standard joint injection:

- Temporary increased pain and stiffness at the injection site (typically lasting 2 to 7 days)

- Mild swelling or bruising

- Rare risks include local infection or nerve/tissue irritation (<1% of cases)

What should I expect after the injection?

The "Flared" Phase: It is normal and expected to experience a temporary increase in pain for the first few days. This is actually a sign that your body's natural inflammatory healing cascade has been triggered.

Avoid Anti-Inflammatories: Do **NOT** take NSAIDs (like Advil, Aleve, Ibuprofen, or Motrin) for at least 7 days before and 2 weeks after the procedure. These medications block the exact inflammatory healing pathway the PRP is trying to stimulate. Use Tylenol (Acetaminophen) or ice packs for comfort.

Timeline for Relief: Unlike a cortisone shot, which works immediately, PRP works gradually. Most patients begin to feel a noticeable improvement in pain and mobility around **4 to 6 weeks**, with healing continuing for several months.

What is the cost of PRP and does insurance pay for it?

Insurance companies do not cover the cost of elective, regenerative procedures such as PRP. Some studies have shown the multiple injections (2-3) per week can last up to one year compared to a single injection which can last 4-6 months when effective.

The cost structure is as follows

- 1 injection= \$1000.00

- 2 injections= \$1800.00

- 3 injections= \$2600.00