

Should Glaucoma Patients Use Glucosamine?

Why I'm Not Keen on Glucosamine

Glucosamine sulfate is a naturally occurring substance that is commonly combined with chondroitin sulfate and used to treat the most common type of arthritis. Glucosamine sulfate is used by our bodies to create glycosaminoglycans (GAGs). GAGs contribute to the regulation of aqueous flow in the eye (possibly by clogging the trabecular meshwork (the eye's "drainage grate"). It makes intuitive sense, then, that glucosamine sulfate (which is converted into GAG) might have an effect on IOP.

Evidence that Glucosamine can be harmful to those with glaucoma:

In 2013^[1] a study was published which evaluated the effect of glucosamine on IOP in patients with a history of ocular hypertension. The study authors found that IOP increased significantly in patients taking this supplement. Fortunately, this increased IOP was reversible with discontinuation of the glucosamine. After discontinuing glucosamine the IOP decreased by around 3mmHg (a significant change).

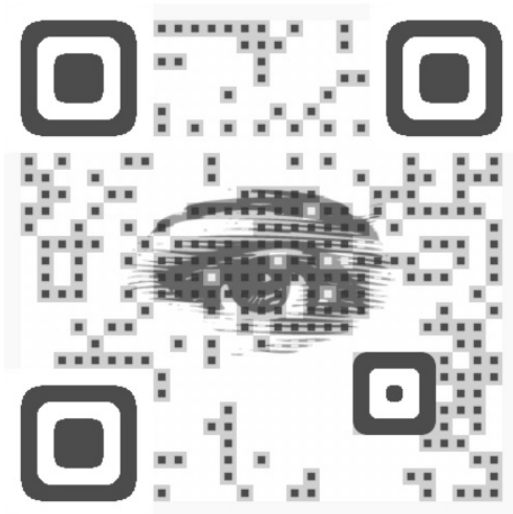
Glaucoma, Glucosamine and Arthritis

For those who are in pain from arthritis and wondering which is the lesser evil (treating pain with glucosamine and risking vision loss or saving vision but putting up with increased pain without the use of glucosamine) there is now good news. It appears that the effect of glucosamine on arthritis is mostly hype. A 2006^[2] study published in the New England Journal of Medicine showed that glucosamine worked no better than a placebo (a sugar pill) in reducing pain from arthritis.

Based on all of the above, I now recommend that all of my patients with glaucoma discontinue glucosamine if they are already taking it.

References:

1. Murphy, R. K., Ketzler, L., Rice, R. D., Johnson, S. M., Doss, M. S., & Jaccoma, E. H. (2013). Oral Glucosamine Supplements as a Possible Ocular Hypertensive Agent. *JAMA Ophthalmol*, 955-957.
2. Clegg, M.D., D. O., Reda, Ph.D., D. J., Harris, C. L., Pharm, D., Klein, M.S., M. A., O'Dell, M.D., J. R., et al. (2006). Glucosamine, Chondroitin Sulfate, and the Two in Combination in Combination for Painful Knee Osteoarthritis. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 795-808.



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