

PRP (Platelet rich plasma)

This new technology involves drawing blood from an individual and then processing it in the office so as to isolate a layer that contains platelet derived growth factors. These are chemicals in the blood that help tell the body how to heal. They can help induce the regeneration of blood vessels, stimulate cells to heal more effectively and ultimately create an environment that helps healing.

However, as with any new technology, the media and others tend to present it as a miracle cure for everything. Since these new technologies are often used in high profile athletes first, they become popular and presented as a "cure all". In fact, PRP preparations are currently only FDA approved for use with bone grafts in fractures that have difficulty healing. It is not approved for arthritis, torn tendons/ligaments, and other injuries. Some research suggests it may help aid in the healing of hamstring muscle tears and help decrease the pain of arthritis if injected into knee joints. It does not grow cartilage or miraculously cure torn ligaments. It does not contain any stem cells, as some people state in marketing material. Recent use in primary surgery of the rotator cuff has shown it does not aid in tendon healing as originally thought and, in fact, has been shown to prohibit healing by some researchers. There is not known to be any significant side effects or negatives to its use at this time, but given its relative lack of study, it is unknown for sure. There does seem to be a tendency toward improvement in pain and function when injected into arthritic joints, but the results are temporary and repeat injections required. It can be used safely as long as proper disclosure of its FDA status to patients is made and it is used for indications that are being studied. We perform these injections at TOCA and are happy to explain the technology and current indications.