



Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) for Shoulder Pain

Introduction

Shoulder pain is a common condition that may arise from a variety of causes including rotator cuff tendinopathy or small tears, subacromial pain syndrome (impingement), and early arthritis of the shoulder joint.

These conditions often result from overuse, degeneration, or minor injury, and can lead to pain, reduced range of motion, and functional limitation.

What is the current treatment?

Initial treatment options typically include:

- Rest and activity modification
- Anti-inflammatory medications
- Physiotherapy
- Corticosteroid injections
- In some cases, surgery

What is Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP)?

Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) is blood plasma with concentrated platelets (the tiny disk-shaped cell fragment, found in large numbers in blood and involved in clotting and repair of damaged tissue). The concentrated platelets found in PRP contain growth factors that are vital to initiate and accelerate tissue repair and regeneration. These bioactive proteins initiate connective tissue healing and repair, promote development of new blood vessels, and stimulate the healing process.

How does PRP Therapy Work?

A small volume of blood (approximately 10–20 ml) is taken from the patient and processed in a centrifuge to concentrate the platelets.

The PRP is then injected into the affected area of the shoulder (such as the subacromial space, the acromioclavicular joint or the glenohumeral joint).

This treatment is delivered as a course of three injections, typically performed at intervals of 2-3 weeks, depending on clinical response.



What are the Potential Benefits of Treatment?

- Reduction in pain
- Improvement in function and range of motion
- Potential to delay or avoid surgery
- Use of the patient's own biological material (no risk of disease transmission)

Complications

As with any injection, complications are uncommon but may include:

- Temporary increase in pain after injection
- Infection
- Bleeding or bruising
- Allergic reaction to local anaesthetic
- Failure to improve symptoms
- Rare injury to surrounding structures

What to expect after the procedure?

Pain

The shoulder may feel numb immediately after the injection due to local anaesthetic. This is often followed by soreness for 24–72 hours.

Activity

You are advised to:

- Avoid strenuous activity for a few days.
- Avoid taking NSAIDs (anti-inflammatory drugs) for at least 2 weeks afterwards.
- Gradually return to normal use.
- Continue physiotherapy as advised.

Driving

You may drive when comfortable and in control of the arm.



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Returning to work

Most patients can return to work within 1–2 days, depending on job demands.

Follow-up and Treatment Course

PRP treatment is usually performed as a series of three injections. Follow-up appointments will be arranged 3-6 weeks after the last injection to monitor progress and to administer subsequent injections as required.



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