



South Orange County Orthopaedics, Inc.

Platelet Rich Plasma Therapy Now Available at SOCO

Platelet Rich Plasma Injections or Autologous PRP therapy is a procedure performed on tendons, ligaments, and painful joints all over the body to accelerate the healing process. Recent studies support the use of Autologous PRP to treat stubborn sports injuries such as Lateral Epicondylitis (Tennis Elbow), Patellar Tendinitis (Jumper's Knee), and Achilles Tendinitis. The process starts by taking a small sample of the patient's blood. The blood is then centrifuged (spun to separate its components) to produce plasma that is highly concentrated with platelets. The plasma is then injected into the site of injury to initiate the body's natural healing cascade.

Platelets facilitate the clotting of blood after an injury while releasing growth factors or healing proteins that are essential to tissue regeneration. These growth factors also promote the development of new blood vessels, stimulate wound healing, and facilitate connective tissue healing and bone repair. While steroid injections provide a temporary relief from these types of tendonites, the long-term benefits are questionable and they can contribute to tissue weakening. On the other hand, PRP injections have little risk and actually contribute to tissue repair resulting in stronger tissue. Many patients that have used PRP therapy were able to avoid long-term medication and/or surgery altogether.

Platelet Rich Plasma therapy was previously used for many professional soccer players, and now has become more common among an array of other professional sports. Recent high profile athletes such as Hines Ward and teammate Troy Palamalu of the Pittsburgh Steelers received PRP therapy after injuries suffered prior to the superbowl. Their remarkable recoveries increased public awareness about the potential benefits of PRP therapy. Takashi Saito, a pitcher for the Los Angeles Dodgers, had Platelet Rich Plasma injected into his elbow and avoided Tommy John Surgery. He was the first baseball player to ever utilize the procedure. Very recently another Dodger, Claudio Vargas, followed his lead by choosing PRP therapy to speed up the healing of his elbow.

"They told me it worked for him (Saito) and that his elbow was in worse shape than mine," said Vargas. He goes on to say that the turning point in his long recovery was when he underwent PRP therapy.

Platelet Rich Plasma Injections are not solely for elite athletes. Many people from all walks of life, have experienced the benefits of PRP injections. Talk to your doctor to see if you are a good candidate for Platelet Rich Plasma therapy.

Caitlin E. Newcamp

<http://www.aaos.org/news/bulletin/sep07/research2.asp>

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