

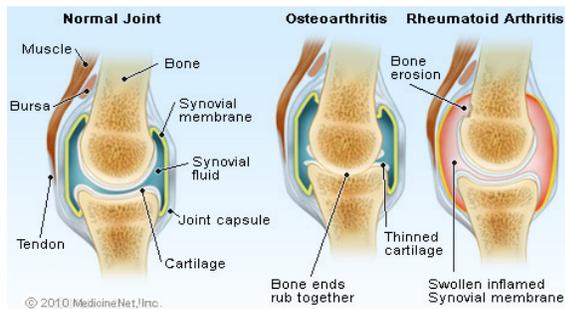
## Patient Summary

**Title:** Injections for knee arthritis: hyaluronate versus corticosteroid?

**Name:** Coridon Quinn

### **Plain Language Summary:**

A joint is where two bones come together for movement. Joints are made up of the cartilage that is covering the bones and fluid that acts as a shock absorber and lubricant. Arthritis is defined as inflammation of a joint. Specifically osteoarthritis is arthritis that is caused by the normal wear and tear of a joint. Osteoarthritis begins when the cartilage erodes away due to damage and eventually causes bone on bone contact. This bone on bone contact causes pain and limits daily activity. Most commonly, osteoarthritis affects weight bearing joints such as the back, knee, and pelvis. Risk factors for osteoarthritis include joint trauma, obesity, and an inactive lifestyle.



### **Normal and Arthritic Joints**

<http://www.medicinenet.com/osteoarthritis/article.htm>

A common treatment for osteoarthritis of the knee is injection of corticosteroid in the joint space. Corticosteroid is a naturally occurring substance that the body produces to control inflammation. Doctors can inject commercially available corticosteroids into the knee. The steroid decreases inflammation and thus decreases pain. The injection can take the pain away quickly, but may not last long (up to 4 weeks). Corticosteroids can only be used about 2-4 times a year. Overuse of corticosteroid injections may cause more damage to the joint space.

Another, rather new, treatment is hyaluronate. Like corticosteroids, hyaluronate is a naturally occurring substance in the body and actually makes up part of the fluid within the normal joint. Doctors can inject hyaluronate in the joint space. It adds cushion and lubricates the joint space. It does not take the pain away immediately, but has been shown to last longer than corticosteroids. The effects have lasted for up to 26 weeks. Unlike corticosteroids, there is no limit as to the number of hyaluronate injections one can receive, but the usual dose is 5 injections.

With all injections, there is a risk of infection and bleeding, but it is rare. Doctors take extreme caution to minimize the risks of both.

**Additional Resources:**

Handout on Health: Osteoarthritis:

[http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health\\_Info/Osteoarthritis/](http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Osteoarthritis/)

Brief overview of medications, supplements, and injections:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/patientinstructions/000374.htm>

**Key Search Terms:**

Osteoarthritis

Corticosteroid

Hyaluronate

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