🧬 What Are PRP Injections?

PRP (Platelet-Rich Plasma) is a regenerative treatment that uses a concentration of your own platelets (from your blood) to **promote healing of injured tendons, ligaments, joints, and muscles**.

It's a form of **orthobiologic therapy** — helping the body heal itself by amplifying its natural growth factors.

🩸 How Is PRP Made?

1. A small amount of your blood is drawn (usually from your arm).
2. The blood is spun in a **centrifuge** to separate:
    - **Platelet-rich plasma** (the healing part)
    - Red and white blood cells
3. The PRP is then **injected** directly into the injured or painful area under ultrasound or image guidance.

💡 How Does PRP Work?

Platelets contain **growth factors** and **proteins** that:

- Reduce inflammation
- Stimulate **tissue repair and regeneration**
- Enhance collagen production
- Promote healing of bone, tendon, and cartilage

Unlike cortisone (which reduces inflammation but doesn't heal), PRP **stimulates natural healing**.

⚕ Conditions Commonly Treated with PRP

🦴 Orthopedic / Sports Medicine:

- **Osteoarthritis** (knee, hip, shoulder)
- **Tendonitis / Tendinosis** (e.g., tennis elbow, Achilles tendinitis)
- **Rotator cuff injuries**
- **Meniscus or labrum tears**
- **Ligament sprains** (e.g., MCL, ACL support)
- **Plantar fasciitis**

💉 Dermatology / Aesthetics:

- **Hair loss treatment** (androgenic alopecia)
- **Skin rejuvenation** (the "vampire facial")

🕐 What to Expect

During the Injection:

- Takes 30–60 minutes.
- May involve local anesthesia or nerve blocks for comfort.
- Mild discomfort during injection is common.

After the Injection:

- Soreness for 2–3 days is normal.
- Healing can take **2–6 weeks**, with best results often at **6–12 weeks**.
- Activity restrictions vary by condition.

📉 Risks and Side Effects

PRP is generally **very safe** because it's made from your own blood. But you may experience:

- Temporary pain or swelling
- Bruising at the injection site

- Rarely: infection or allergic reaction

📈 Success Rates and Evidence

- Results vary, but many studies show significant pain relief and functional improvement.
- PRP is **FDA-cleared for orthopedic use**, but not FDA-approved for specific indications — it's often used **off-label**.

💲 Cost and Insurance

- **Cost:** $500–$2,000 per injection (varies by provider and region).
- **Insurance:** Often **not covered** for musculoskeletal use; sometimes covered for dental or surgical use.

et's **compare PRP vs. cortisone injections**, and then we'll tailor the comparison specifically for **knee osteoarthritis** and **shoulder tendonitis**, since those are two of the most common uses.

⚖️ PRP vs. Cortisone Injections: Key Differences

Feature	PRP (Platelet-Rich Plasma)	Cortisone (Steroid Injection)
What it is	Your own blood, concentrated platelets	Synthetic anti-inflammatory steroid
Mechanism	Stimulates **healing and tissue**	Reduces **inflammation only**
Onset of Relief	Slower (1–4 weeks)	Fast (1–3 days)
Duration of	Long-term (months to over a year)	Short-term (weeks to a few months)
Tissue Impact	Promotes regeneration	Can **weaken cartilage/tendon** with repeat use
Side Effects	Minimal (uses your own blood)	Higher risk: tendon rupture, joint
FDA Status	Not officially approved for joints	Approved for inflammatory conditions
Insurance Coverage	Usually **not covered**	Often covered
Cost	$500–$2,000 per injection	$50–$200 (with insurance)

🦵 PRP vs. Cortisone for Knee Osteoarthritis

✅ PRP Advantages:

- Improves **joint function and reduces pain** long-term
- May slow **cartilage degeneration**
- Ideal for **mild to moderate arthritis**
- **Repeatable** without tissue damage

⚠️ Cortisone Concerns:

- Provides fast relief, but wears off in weeks/months
- **Repeated use** may **weaken cartilage** and accelerate arthritis
- Best for short-term symptom control or flare-ups

📊 **Studies** show PRP provides **longer-lasting pain relief** than cortisone after 6 months in mild to moderate OA.

💪 PRP vs. Cortisone for Shoulder Tendonitis (e.g., rotator cuff)

✅ PRP Benefits:

- Encourages **tendon healing** over time
- May reduce recurrence
- Best if combined with **physical therapy**

⚠️ Cortisone Risks:

- Reduces inflammation quickly
- May delay healing or cause **tendon weakening** or rupture with repeated use
- Temporary fix without addressing the underlying issue

📌 **Use Case**: Cortisone is helpful in **acute inflammation**, while PRP is better for **chronic tendon degeneration** (tendinosis).

Read our Regenexx Page for various joint and tendon injections.