


Key points

The NHS needs to make sure that it makes the best possible use of the funding it receives so that it can continue to invest in new services and treatments to benefit patients.

Glucosamine will no longer be prescribed. This because there is no clinical evidence to show that it works as a treatment for osteoarthritis.

Glucosamine may interact with other medicines you may already be taking or affect some medical conditions. You should always seek advice from your community pharmacist if you are considering using glucosamine.



Important information about **glucosamine**

This leaflet explains why the NHS North of Tyne is stopping the prescription of glucosamine as a treatment for osteoarthritis.



What is glucosamine?

Glucosamine is a natural component of cartilage – which is found in the joints in between your bones.

Some people take glucosamine as a food supplement, sometimes combined with chondroitin (another natural component of cartilage) and it has been used in the treatment of osteoarthritis which is a condition which causes wear and tear of some joints in the body.

There are various products available over the counter from community pharmacies, health food shops and other retail outlets such as supermarkets. However the quality of these food supplement products can vary because there are no statutory regulations regarding their purity and content.

Why can't I get glucosamine from my GP anymore?

The NHS needs to make sure that it makes the best possible use of the funding it receives so that it can continue to invest in new services and treatments to benefit patients.

The NHS is guided by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) who reviewed glucosamine in February 2008 as part of their clinical guidelines for the treatment of osteoarthritis. There was a lack of good medical evidence from all the studies of glucosamine which led NICE to conclude that it should not be funded by the NHS.

Can I still use glucosamine?

NICE did not find any clinical evidence to suggest that glucosamine was an effective treatment for osteoarthritis. However you may still choose to buy glucosamine as a food supplement. Ask your local community pharmacist for advice on a suitable product.

How safe is glucosamine?

Patients with particular health conditions should always seek medical advice before taking health supplements.

Glucosamine may affect blood sugar so patients with **diabetes** should monitor their blood sugar while taking the supplement.

Some glucosamine comes from shellfish so people with **allergies to shellfish** may experience a reaction.

Some glucosamine supplements should be avoided in patients with **poor kidney function**. [This is because there have been some reports of possible kidney damage associated with the use of glucosamine.](#)

You should AVOID taking glucosamine if you are:

- Taking warfarin as it can affect blood clotting
- Pregnant or breastfeeding
- Taking anti-cancer drugs