

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

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Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

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FOR THE MEDIA

Glucosamine is a chemical found in your body that helps make cartilage (the protective tissue at the ends of bones). When cartilage breaks down in people with osteoarthritis (joint pain in your hands, neck, lower back, knees, or hips), glucosamine may help slow this down.

You can take glucosamine supplements as pills, tablets, capsules, or powder that can be made into a drink by dissolving it in water. You can also rub a glucosamine gel or lotion onto your skin.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

Glucosamine is used to:

- Decrease swelling in joints
- Treat osteoarthritis
- Treat temporomandibular joint disorder (TMJ). TMJ is pain and difficulty moving the jaw joint and muscles around it.

Glucosamine also has other uses that haven't been studied by doctors to see if they work.

Talk with your healthcare provider before taking glucosamine supplements. They can interact with some prescription medications and affect how they work.

For more information, read the "What else do I need to know?" section below.

What are the side effects?

Side effects of glucosamine may include:

- Nausea (feeling like you're going to throw up)
- Diarrhea (loose or watery bowel movements)
- Abdominal (belly) pain
- Heartburn
- Itching
- Skin rash
- Temporary memory loss
- Low blood pressure
- Sleepiness
- Trouble breathing

What else do I need to know?

- Talk with your healthcare provider before taking glucosamine supplements if you have liver disease. Glucosamine may worsen your condition.
- Talk with your healthcare provider before taking glucosamine supplements if you're taking blood thinners such as warfarin (Coumadin®). Taking both may cause side effects.
- Talk with your healthcare provider if you have diabetes or glaucoma (an eye condition that may lead to blindness). Glucosamine may worsen your condition.
- Talk with your healthcare provider if you're allergic to shellfish. You may have an allergic reaction to glucosamine supplements.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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