

UBC debunks usefulness of glucosamine in relieving arthritis pain

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An expensive osteoarthritis fighter used by thousands of Canadians has been shown to have no long term benefit.

The popular food supplement glucosamine was found to be no better than a placebo in an Arthritis Research Centre of Canada study led by University of B.C. rheumatologist Dr. Jolanda Cibere.

Glucosamine is a shellfish derivative, with a "treatment" course costing as much as \$50 a month.

The study looked at 137 Canadians aged 44 to 88 who had been taking glucosamine for knee joint pain for an average of two years. All had reported at least a moderate benefit with the supplement.

Subjects in the placebo group flared up 42 per cent compared with 45 per cent in the glucosamine group. As well, glucosamine users flared as quickly as placebo users.

"Glucosamine has been used for many years and its effectiveness has been controversial all along," said Cibere. "Our study shows that even if the supplement was initially perceived by study participants to be helpful, it has no benefit for {long-term} maintenance and continued use is not effective to control flare-ups."