

The Knee Load Plan

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Step 1. Rate your knee honestly.

The NIH GAIT trial found no benefit overall, and a benefit only in the moderate to severe pain group. So start by placing yourself. Score your worst day this week from 0 to 10. Under 4 with stiffness that eases after ten minutes of moving is the mild group, and a supplement is the least likely thing to help you. Consistently 5 or higher, or pain that wakes you or limits stairs, is the group the trial actually helped, and it is also the group that should be seen by a doctor.

Step 2. Build the free foundation for four weeks.

NIAMS puts movement and strength around the joint ahead of every supplement. Four moves, three days a week, ten to fifteen repetitions each, stopping short of sharp pain: sit to stand from a chair without using your hands; step ups onto a low step, leading with each leg; a wall sit held for twenty to forty seconds; and straight leg raises lying down. Add a twenty minute walk on most days. Load is medicine for a joint; rest is not.

Step 3. Run a fair supplement trial, with a stop date.

If you are in the moderate to severe group and your doctor agrees, take a full daily serving of a combination formula every day for eight to twelve weeks. Do not judge it at two weeks. Write your start date and your pain score on the label. At twelve weeks, score again. No meaningful change means stop, and stop means stop.

Before you start: the safety checklist

- Shellfish allergy: glucosamine sulfate is made from shellfish. Skip it.
- Blood thinners: bromelain, boswellia and curcumin can each affect bleeding. Ask your prescriber before your first capsule.
- Diabetes medication: Cleveland Clinic notes glucosamine and chondroitin may affect blood sugar control, so tell whoever manages your diabetes.
- Pregnancy and nursing: not established. Do not start.
- Third party testing: supplements are not reviewed by the FDA before sale, so an independent test seal is the floor, not a bonus.

When it stops being a shelf question

Worsening pain, swelling, a knee that gives way, or pain that limits walking and stairs are reasons to be evaluated. NIAMS is clear that the plan for advanced joint disease is a medical one, and nothing in this plan replaces it.

Sources

- New England Journal of Medicine: Glucosamine, Chondroitin Sulfate, and the Two in Combination for Painful Knee Osteoarthritis (GAIT)
- NCCIH: Glucosamine and Chondroitin for Osteoarthritis
- NIAMS: Osteoarthritis
- Cleveland Clinic: Glucosamine and Chondroitin Oral Tablets and Capsules
- NIH Office of Dietary Supplements: Dietary Supplements, What You Need to Know

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