

What to Expect After Stem Cell Therapy

You've done it. You have done your research regarding stem cell therapy and are looking forward to improved health and quality of life after the procedure. While every case is different, here's a sneak peek at what you might expect in the weeks and months after your stem cell treatment.

Immediately After the Procedure

It is imperative that you adhere to your doctor's post-op procedure restrictions. While most people can resume their daily routine, for the best chance of long-lasting benefits, avoid anti-inflammatory medications, rest the treated area for the first 2 weeks, and start physical therapy as soon as the doctor gives you the "all clear."

Weeks 1 and 2

There may be noticeable inflammation in the treated area, which is normal as your immune system gets to work helping you heal. The rush of white blood cells and substances produced by the body create swelling in the area, which sets the stage for the stem cells' regenerative healing of damaged tissue in the area. This may cause a little increase in your pain level for a couple hours, up to a couple days but will decrease as the anti-inflammatory properties of the stem cells is working.

After you have rested the treated area for an amount of time indicated by your doctor, light, easy movement may be advised – but let any pain or discomfort you feel be your guide. For example, you may want to avoid too many trips up and down stairs (especially if you have had hip or knee injections) and keep lifting to a minimum (especially if you have had rotator cuff or shoulder injections). Some walking can be helpful to minimize soreness for spinal patients.

Muscle soreness and spasms can be managed with heat (hot shower, hot tub, *moist* heating pad), We do not recommend ice because we do not want to interfere with natural healing process produced with stem cell injection.

Because stem cells do not function optimally in the presence of anti-inflammatory medication, you should discontinue or avoid taking any non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g., aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen), as well as any natural remedies or over-the-counter supplements such as turmeric, arnica, or others that boast of having anti-inflammatory properties. If needed you may resume in one month, but our goal here is to "Get you out of pain, Keep you out of pain with the least invasive procedure that will give you the best possible outcome."

Weeks 3 and 4

After a few weeks, your doctor or physical therapist may recommend that you start a *nonimpact*, range of motion exercise regime that may include using an elliptical machine, gentle walking, or jogging in the pool. To reiterate, the key here is nonimpact, which gives the new stem cells time

to develop into the specialized cells needed to heal the area. Patience is a virtue and will help you heal better.

Weeks 5 and 6

By weeks 5 and 6, you may be ready to begin the strengthening phase. At your one month follow-up visit we will evaluate your progress, review your goals and guide you into healthy choices that will not interfere with your healing. . While you may be able to increase resistance with light weights or add some cardio exercise, you still must proceed with caution. Your stem cells are building new tissue and need oxygen and blood flow through gentle exercise but shouldn't be overstressed. You may seek to expand your physical therapy regime with gentle stretching, yoga or Pilates, but avoid any sort of compressive exercise or heavy lifting.

Weeks 7 and 8

Over time, you may be able to add aerobic activity to your regime without risk of injuring the maturing stem cells. Still, cease activity if there is pain in the treated area. Continue to follow your post injection instructions.

Months 3 through 6

By months 3 through 6, stem cells are at their peak of healing potential; let them do their job by not overstressing them. Continue to strengthen your joints by walking, biking, stretching, etc., but continue to use caution when hitting the gym or exerting yourself around the house.

Communication is Key

For most patients, stem cell therapy is uncharted territory, providing a whole new experience of healing and recovery than with surgery. It's OK to ask lots of questions before and after the procedure.

If working with a physical therapist, make sure they are familiar with the post-op protocols of stem cell procedures, as some very common and otherwise effective exercises could do more harm than good to the treated area.

Most importantly, talk with us. You already have made an important decision to use stem cell therapy to improve your health and quality of life. At the Regenerative Medical Center of Southern California, you can discuss the benefits of stem cell therapy with an experienced