

Unproven stem cell treatments gain popularity boost from Max Scherzer, Tiger Woods, other pro athletes

Stem cells and related therapies, such as platelet injections, have been used for the past decade by top athletes: golfer [Tiger Woods](#), tennis pro [Rafael Nadal](#), hockey legend [Gordie Howe](#), basketball player [Kobe Bryant](#) and NFL quarterback [Peyton Manning](#). Stem cells are offered at roughly [1,000 clinics nationwide](#), as well as at some of the country's [most respected hospitals](#). Depending on the treatment, the cost can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars. Insurance does not cover the treatments in most cases, so patients pay out of pocket.

Yet for all the hype, there's no proof it works, said [Paul Knoepfler](#), a professor of cell biology and human anatomy at the University of California at Davis School of Medicine.

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[Washington Nationals pitcher Max] Scherzer, 35, said he received a [stem cell shot](#) [August 2] for a mild strain in his upper back and shoulder. According to a news story on the Major League Baseball website, Scherzer also previously had a stem cell injection to treat a [thumb injury](#).

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A spokeswoman for the Washington Nationals declined to provide information about Scherzer's treatment, such as the type of stem cells used or the name of the clinician who administered them.

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