

Arthroscopy of the Knee

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This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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What is an arthroscopy of your knee?

An arthroscopy (keyhole surgery) allows your surgeon to see inside your knee using a camera inserted through small cuts on your skin. Your surgeon can diagnose problems such as a torn cartilage (meniscus), ligament damage and arthritis.

What are the benefits of surgery?

The aim is to confirm exactly what the problem is and for many people the problem can be treated at the same time. The benefit of keyhole surgery is less pain afterwards and, for some people, a quicker recovery.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

Problems inside your knee can often be diagnosed using a magnetic scan (MRI scan) but you may then need an arthroscopy to treat the problem.

Physiotherapy and anti-inflammatory painkillers such as ibuprofen can sometimes prevent or delay the need for an arthroscopy.

What does the operation involve?

Various anaesthetic techniques are possible. The operation usually takes 30 to 45 minutes.

Your surgeon will examine your knee ligaments while you are under the anaesthetic and your muscles are completely relaxed. They will insert a small camera through one or more small cuts around your knee.

Your surgeon will examine the inside of your knee for damage to the cartilages, joint surfaces and ligaments. It is usually possible for your surgeon to trim or repair a torn cartilage without needing to make a larger cut.

How can I prepare myself for the operation?

If you smoke, stopping smoking now may reduce your risk of developing complications and will improve your long-term health.

Try to maintain a healthy weight. You have a higher risk of developing complications if you are overweight.

Regular exercise should help to prepare you for the operation, help you to recover and improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Speak to the healthcare team about any vaccinations you might need to reduce your risk of serious illness while you recover. When you come into hospital, practise hand washing and wear a face covering when asked.

What complications can happen?

Some complications can be serious and even cause death.

General complications of any operation

- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication
- Blood clot in your leg
- Blood clot in your lung
- Difficulty passing urine
- Chest infection

Specific complications of this operation

- Damage to nerves around your knee
- Infection in your knee joint
- Severe pain

Consequences of this procedure

- Pain
- Unsightly scarring of your skin

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day.

It is common for your knee to be a little swollen for a few weeks.

Walking can be uncomfortable and you may need to take painkillers to help relieve your pain.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you

start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people make a good recovery and can return to normal activities.

Summary

An arthroscopy allows your surgeon to diagnose and treat some common problems affecting your knee, without the need for a large cut on your skin. This may reduce the amount of pain you feel and speed up your recovery.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

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