

OS03lite Arthroscopy of the Knee

This document will give you information about an arthroscopy of the knee. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is an arthroscopy of the knee?

An arthroscopy (also called 'keyhole' surgery) allows your surgeon to see inside your knee using a camera inserted through small cuts in the skin. Your surgeon can diagnose problems such as a torn cartilage, ligament damage and arthritis (see figure 1).

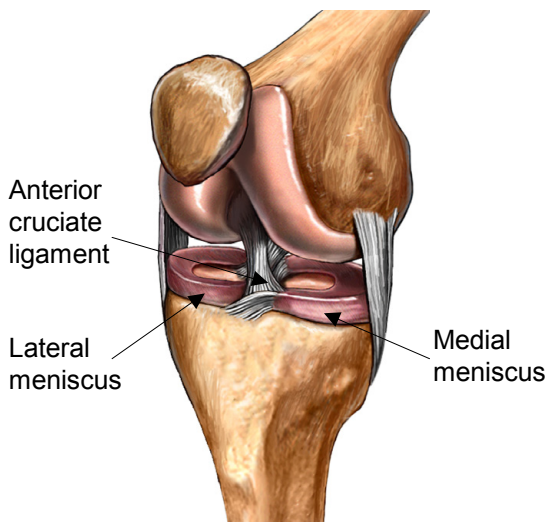


Figure 1
Internal structure of the right knee

What are the benefits of surgery?

The main benefit of surgery is to confirm exactly what the problem is and in many cases to treat the problem at the same time.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

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

What does the operation involve?

A variety of anaesthetic techniques are possible. The operation usually takes between half an hour and three-quarters of an hour.

Your surgeon will examine the inside of your knee. They will wash out any loose material caused by wear of the joint surfaces. It is usually possible for your surgeon to trim or repair a torn cartilage without needing to make a larger cut.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications of any operation

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring
- Blood clots
- Difficulty passing urine

2 Specific complications of this operation

- Damage to nerves around the knee
- Developing a lump under the wound
- Infection in the knee joint
- Severe pain, stiffness and loss of use of the knee (Complex Regional Pain Syndrome)

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day.

It is common for the knee to be a little swollen for a few weeks. Walking can be uncomfortable.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, you should ask a member of the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people make a good recovery and can return to normal activities. Your surgeon can tell you if you are likely to get further problems with your knee.

Summary

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

Further information

- NHS smoking helpline on 0800 022 4332 and at www.smokefree.nhs.uk
- www.eatwell.gov.uk – for advice on maintaining a healthy weight
- www.eidoactive.co.uk – for information on how exercise can help you
- www.aboutmyhealth.org – for support and information you can trust
- Internet Society of Orthopaedic Surgery and Trauma at www.orthogate.org
- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons at www.aaos.org
- Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome Association at www.rsds.org
- NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 (0845 606 46 47 – textphone)

Acknowledgements

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