

OS25lite Arthroscopy of the Elbow

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

What is an arthroscopy of the elbow?

An arthroscopy (also called 'keyhole' surgery) allows your surgeon to see inside your elbow using a camera inserted through small cuts in the skin. They should be able to treat some problems using special surgical instruments.

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 a joint can often be diagnosed using special tests such as CT and MRI scans. However, you may then need an arthroscopy to treat the problem.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is usually performed under a general anaesthetic. The operation usually takes about half an hour.

Your surgeon will usually make about two to four small cuts around the joint. They will place a small telescope through one of the cuts so they can examine the joint. They will place surgical instruments through the other cuts if they need to treat any problems with the joint (see figure 1).

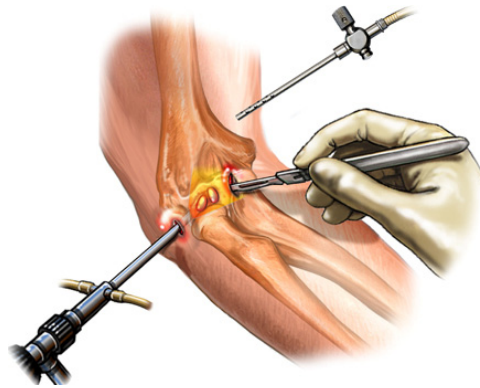


Figure 1

Arthroscopy of the elbow

What complications can happen?

1 General complications of any operation

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring

2 Specific complications of this operation

- Bleeding into the joint
- Infection in the joint
- Severe pain, stiffness and loss of use of the arm and hand (Complex Regional Pain Syndrome)
- Damage to nerves
- Damage to the radial nerve

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day.

Your physiotherapist may give you exercises and advice to help you to recover from the operation. It can take a few weeks to get back to normal activities. 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 who have treatment have a major improvement. However, it does take time for pain to lessen and movement to increase. Symptoms often come back with time.

Summary

An arthroscopy of the elbow allows your surgeon to diagnose and treat problems affecting the joint, 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
- 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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