

OS34lite Arthroscopy of the Ankle

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

What is an arthroscopy of the ankle?

An arthroscopy (also called 'keyhole surgery') allows your surgeon to see inside your ankle using a camera inserted through small cuts in the skin. Your surgeon can diagnose problems such as damage to the joint surface or ligaments and arthritis.

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 ankle 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 insert a special camera through one or more small cuts around your ankle and then examine the inside of your ankle (see figure 1). They will wash out any loose material caused by wear of the joint surfaces. Your surgeon will remove any spurs of bone or swelling of the lining of your ankle joint.

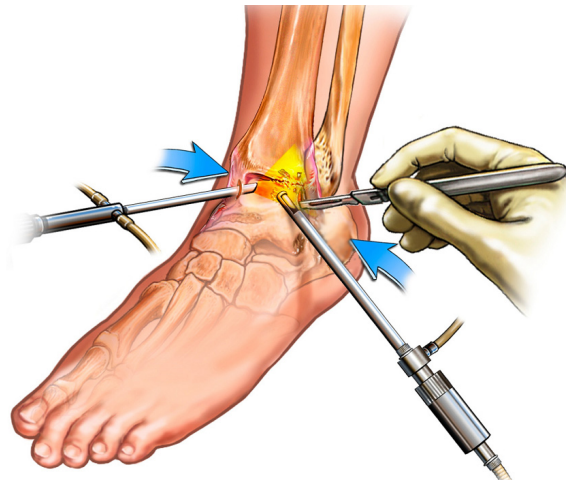


Figure 1

Arthroscopy of the ankle

If you have torn your ankle ligaments, you may need a reconstruction operation. This is a larger procedure that normally needs a bigger cut. Your surgeon will discuss this with you beforehand.

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 ankle
- Compartment syndrome, where the calf muscles swell and get tight
- Infection in the ankle joint
- Severe pain, stiffness and loss of use of the ankle (Complex Regional Pain Syndrome)

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day.

It is common for the ankle 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 ankle.

Summary

An arthroscopy allows your surgeon to diagnose and treat some common problems affecting the ankle, 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
- www.thefootandankleclinic.com
- Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome Association at www.rsds.org
- NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 (0845 606 46 47 – textphone)

Acknowledgements

Author: Mr Stephen Milner DM FRCS (Tr. & Orth.)
Illustrations: Medical Illustration Copyright © 2010
Nucleus Medical Art. All rights reserved.
www.nucleusinc.com

**Used under licence by The Horder Centre.
This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.**

OS34lite
Issued June 2010
Expires end of December 2010



www.rcsed.ac.uk

