

ARTHROSCOPIC SURGERY

An **Arthroscopy** is a surgical procedure in which a small fibre-optic telescope {Arthroscope} is inserted into a joint. This is achieved by attaching the Arthroscope to a miniature television camera, so the Surgeon is able to see the interior of a joint. The vision is then displayed onto a television monitor to enlarge the image. During the procedure the Surgeon can determine the severity and type of injury and then repair or correct the problem. The most common types of Arthroscopic Surgery include removal or repair of a torn meniscus (cartilage) ligament reconstruction, removal of loose debris and/or trimming of damaged cartilage.

Anaesthetic

In most cases a general anaesthetic will be given. Sometimes a local or epidural anaesthetic is used for medical reasons but this is very rare. The Anaesthetist will usually meet you at the Surgicentre or make arrangements to see you in his/her rooms 1-2 days prior to the operation and will discuss any queries you may have regarding which anaesthetic is best for you.

The Operating Theatre

Once in the theatre, the Anaesthetist and/or Anaesthetist Assistant will apply various monitors to you so the Anaesthetist can assess your vital signs whilst you are having your operation. An anaesthetic drug will be given to relax you or put you to sleep. Oxygen will then be administered through a light mask. A tourniquet will be applied to the limb to be operated on. For routine procedures the operation takes approximately 30 minutes. Two to three small incisions, approximately 5mm in size, are made and these are usually closed with steri-strips or sutures. Local anaesthetic is injected into the joint whilst in theatre so you should be pain free.

AFTER SURGERY

Recovery

On awaking there will be a bandage covering the affected area. The limb may feel strange/numb at first. If a regional block is used the limb will be numb for several hours. Your condition will be monitored closely until your observations are within normal limits. The sedation of the general anaesthetic needs to wear off and any nausea or pain needs to be controlled prior to going home. After a local anaesthetic you may need to stay for an hour to have some refreshments and have the necessary discharge papers completed.

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT YOU DO NOT DRIVE YOURSELF HOME AND ARRANGE FOR A RESPONSIBLE ADULT TO STAY WITH YOU FOR THE FIRST 24 HOURS POST OPERATIVELY.



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Prior to leaving the Surgicentre, you will be given a list of instructions for the first week or until you see your Surgeon again.

Home

- It is most important that you rest and elevate the affected limb on pillows for at least 24-48 hours to assist in the reduction of swelling and aid in pain relief and healing. Applying ice packs 4-6 times per day for 30 minutes at a time also assist in the reduction of swelling.
- It is best to take regular pain-relieving medications when you start to feel pain. You may require analgesia for at least 24- 48 hours or longer.
- Keep the bandage covering the wounds **clean** and **dry** for at least 2-3 days. The incisions need to be kept dry for the first week.
- Remember - although the skin incisions are small, you have undergone surgery and had a general anaesthetic and must reduce your activities accordingly.
- Crutches may be required to aid in weight bearing if the operated limb is a leg.
- You may require assistance with activities such as driving [do not drive a car until you regain full movement, sensation and adequate pain control, approximately one week] and home duties.
- If you have any problems contact your Surgeon or General Practitioner at any time, or the nearest Emergency Department.

Returning to Work

It depends on the type of injury you have sustained, the nature of surgery performed and the type of work that you do. For simple procedures it is usually about 3-4 days after surgery. Your joint needs to feel comfortable enough to allow you to perform your normal work duties. If your work involves heavy labour and you have had an extensive procedure it may be 4-6 weeks before you can return to work. Your surgeon will advise you when you can return to work.

Results from your Arthroscopy will be available at your follow-up appointment with your Surgeon.

A Nurse at the Surgicentre will answer any further queries you may have regarding your procedure at your Pre-Admission Telephone Interview.



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