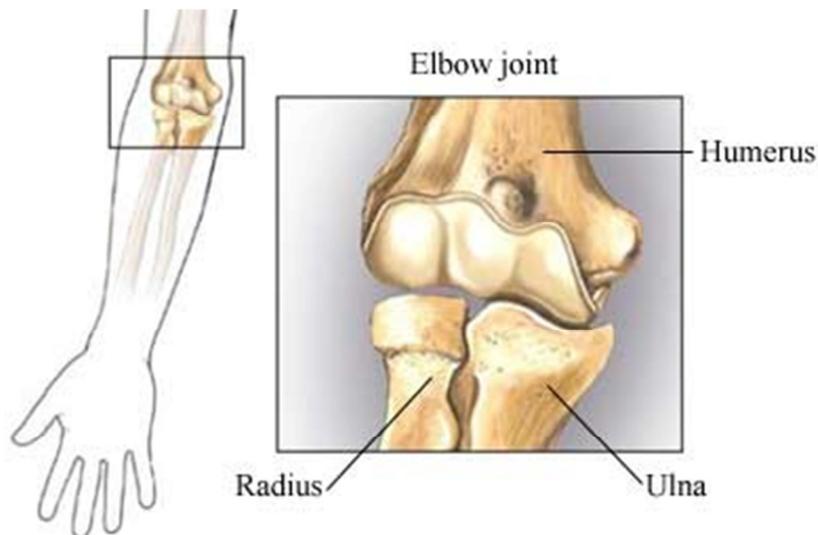


ELBOW ARTHROSCOPY

Arthroscopy or 'keyhole surgery' of the elbow involves making an incision, approximately 1cm over the inside skin of the elbow in order to examine the internal structures using a camera. Additional incisions can be made to allow instruments to be introduced into the joint to treat a number of conditions affecting the elbow such as damage to the joint surface, loose bodies, inflamed joint lining, and bony spurs. The procedure is usually performed through 1cm incisions on either side of the elbow, often with an additional two or more small incisions at the back of the elbow or at other points around the elbow, depending on the condition treated.



The Operation

Most elbow arthroscopy is performed as a day case procedure. You will be given a time and date for your surgery along with any special instructions. Please ensure that you bring any x-rays or scans to the hospital on the morning of the operation. Both the surgeon and anaesthetist will see you before the operation. They will explain the procedure and ask you to sign a consent form. You should confirm which elbow is to be operated on and take the opportunity to ask for more information if you wish.

At the end of the procedure the elbow itself and the small incisions are injected with local anaesthetic to help with pain relief. In addition your anaesthetist may have used a local nerve block to numb the area in the postoperative period. Finally a padded bandage is applied over the dressings and the elbow may be placed in a postoperative sling.

After the Operation

When you return home you may find that the elbow becomes more uncomfortable as the local anaesthetic wears off. You should take the pain medication given to you according to the instructions as required. Keep the elbow elevated as much as possible. If the dressing or splint feels too tight then it is perfectly acceptable to loosen it.

The dressings on your elbow do not need to be changed until your follow up appointment. This will normally be 6-10 days following surgery. Please keep the dressings dry. If you need to take a shower, tape a plastic bag over the elbow. Occasionally the arthroscopy puncture sites may leak through the dressings. If you are concerned about this please contact your surgeon.

Please rest the elbow as much as possible during the first 48 hours after surgery. After 48 hours you can gently move your elbow (flexion and extension of your elbow, and rotation of your forearm), according to how the elbow feels.

If you have a sedentary or computer-based job you may return to work after 2-3 days when the elbow is comfortable, however you should not use the arm that was operated on for any lifting at all. You should not drive a car until your surgeon clears you for this. If your job involves heavy manual work you should wait until you receive clearance at the follow-up check.

When you leave the hospital you should have an appointment card with a time for your follow-up check at the clinic. If not, please telephone to make an appointment.

Complications

Although the risks of arthroscopy are minimal no procedure is entirely risk-free. Possible complications of elbow arthroscopy include anaesthetic complications, wound and joint infections, nerve injury, prolonged wound leakage, and deep venous thrombosis (DVT) or blood clots in the calves. It is possible to have some numbness around the scars but this usually becomes less noticeable with time.