

KNEE ARTHROSCOPY

Arthroscopy or 'keyhole surgery' of the knee involves making an incision, approximately 1cm over the front of the knee in order to examine the internal structures using a camera. Additional incisions may be made to allow the introduction of instruments to treat a wide variety of conditions affecting the knee.



The Operation

Knee arthroscopy is usually 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 knee is to be operated on and take the opportunity to ask for more information if you wish. At the end of your operation the knee will be filled with local anaesthetic to help with pain relief.

After the Operation

Your knee will be bandaged before you go home. You should leave the bandage on for 48 hours. If you wish to take a shower, tape a plastic bag over the knee. After 48 hours you can bath or shower normally. Let the adhesive strips peel off the puncture sites. Usually the puncture sites are dry by 48 hours following arthroscopy. Occasionally the puncture sites may leak, in which case you can use a band-aid to cover this.

When the anaesthetic wears off you should expect some pain in the knee but this should not be severe. If you experience pain you should use the tablets provided and elevate the leg. Applying an ice pack to the knee may also be helpful. Some swelling is to be expected and it may actually increase gradually for the first 2-3 days. If the bandage feels too tight please re-wrap it.



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You will be able to walk when you go home but you should plan to rest up for the first 48 hours. During this time you should concentrate on working on the movement of the knee rather than walking or standing for long periods. After 48 hours you can increase your activity according to how the knee feels.

If you have a sedentary job you may return to work when you can walk unaided with reasonable comfort. You should be able to drive a car at this time but must have full control of your leg. 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, telephone to make an appointment.

Complications

Although the risks of arthroscopy are minimal no procedure is entirely risk-free. Possible complications of arthroscopy include anaesthetic complications, wound and joint infections 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.

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