

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

What is an arthroscopy of your shoulder?

An arthroscopy (keyhole surgery) involves examining the inside of your shoulder using a telescope inserted through small cuts on your skin. Your surgeon should be able to treat some problems using special surgical instruments.

What are the benefits of surgery?

The aim is to confirm exactly what the problem is and for many people the problem can be treated at the same time.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

Problems inside a joint can often be diagnosed using 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 40 minutes.

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

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

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

2 Specific complications

- Bleeding into the joint
- Infection in your shoulder joint
- Severe pain, stiffness and loss of use of your arm and hand (complex regional pain syndrome)
- Damage to nerves

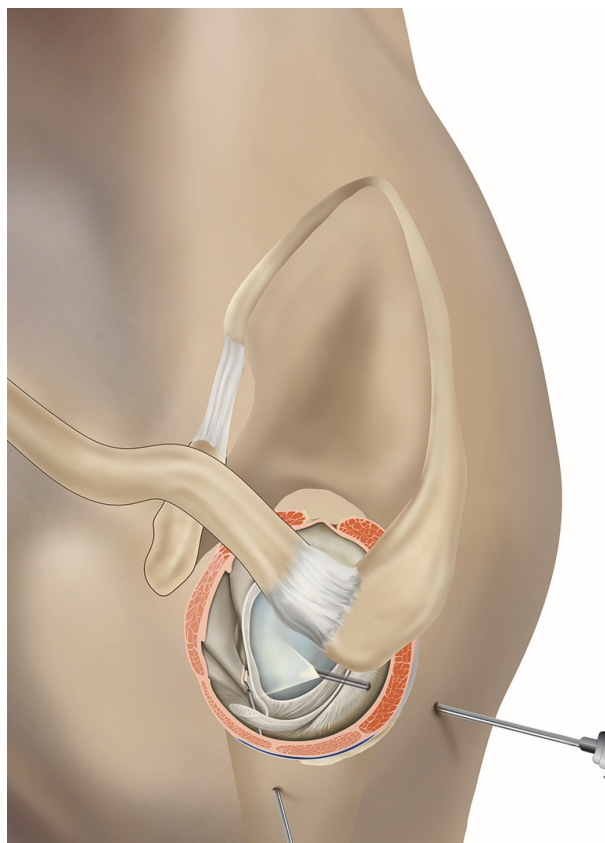


Figure 1

An arthroscopy of the shoulder

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day. The physiotherapist may give you exercises and advice to help you to recover from the operation. It can take up to three months to get back to normal activities.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people have a major improvement but it takes time for pain to lessen and movement to increase. Symptoms often come back with time.

Summary

An arthroscopy of your shoulder allows your surgeon to diagnose and treat problems affecting the joint, without the need for a large cut on your skin. This may reduce the amount of pain you feel and speed up your recovery.

Acknowledgements

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