



Spire Healthcare

Treatment summary

Knee arthroscopy operation

What's arthroscopy?

Arthroscopy is a “keyhole” operation that is used to look inside and treat joints, especially the knee joint. It is performed through very small cuts in the skin, using a narrow, tube-like telescope called an arthroscope.

Arthroscopy is useful for finding out what is causing symptoms, deliver treatment for conditions such as arthritis and inflammation, take small samples of tissue, or repair damage to tissues and cartilage. The procedure is usually done as a day-case.

Arthroscopy is usually done under general anaesthesia, which means that you will be asleep during the procedure, or for some patients, epidural or spinal anaesthesia is preferable. This will completely block the feeling in your legs but you stay awake. Your surgeon and anaesthetist will discuss with you which type of anaesthesia is most suitable in your case.

Your surgeon will also explain the benefits and risks of having a knee arthroscopy, and will discuss the alternatives to the procedure.

About the operation

Your surgeon will make two small cuts (about 5mm long) in the skin around the knee joint. The first cut is used to pump sterile fluid into the joint to help produce a clearer picture. The second cut is used to insert the arthroscope.

Your surgeon will view the joint, by looking directly through the arthroscope, or at pictures it sends to a video screen. If necessary, other instruments can be inserted to repair any damage or remove material that interferes with movement or causes pain in the knee.

Afterwards, the fluid is drained out and the cuts are closed with stitches or adhesive strips. Then a dressing and a bandage is wrapped around the knee. An arthroscopy can take from 30 minutes to over an hour, depending on how much work your surgeon needs to do inside the joint.

Before you go home, a physiotherapist will also visit you to guide you through exercises to get your joint moving.

Following your operation, you are likely to have some pain, stiffness and swelling around the joint, which may last a few weeks. Gentle knee exercises will help reduce stiffness and discomfort.

Arthroscopy is a commonly performed and generally safe surgical procedure. For most people, the benefits in terms of improved symptoms, or from having a clear diagnosis of a joint problem, are greater than the disadvantages. However, all surgery carries an element of risk.

Specific complications of arthroscopy could include accidental damage to the inside of the joint or a loss of feeling in the skin over the knee. Uncommonly, it's also possible to develop a blood clot in the veins of one of your legs (deep vein thrombosis, DVT).

The chance of complications depends on the exact type of operation you are having and other factors such as your general health. Ask your surgeon to explain in more detail how any risks apply to you.

To find out more about having a knee arthroscopy in a Spire Healthcare hospital, please contact your local Spire hospital.



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