

KNEE ARTHROSCOPY

What is an arthroscopy?

Arthroscopy is a procedure that allows a surgeon to look at the inside and repair joints without having to cut open the joint. Orthopedic surgeons are bone, joint, and muscle specialists who perform this surgery.

When is it used?

Arthroscopy is often done to:

- see what is causing a joint problem in a joint
- see if a diseased joint is worsening
- see how well treatment is working
- repair a problem found in a joint, such as removing small pieces of bone from the joint or repairing a tear in the cartilage or ligaments

Arthroscopy can be used for most joints. The six joints most frequently examined are the knee, shoulder, elbow, ankle, hip, and wrist.

How do I prepare for an arthroscopy?

Plan for your care and recovery after the operation by:

- allowing for time to rest
- finding other people to help you with your day-to-day duties
- following instructions provided by your healthcare provider

If you are to have general anesthesia, do not eat or drink anything after midnight or the morning before the procedure. Do not even drink coffee, tea, or water.

What happens during the procedure?

You are given a local, regional, or general anesthesia. A general anesthetic will relax your muscles and make you feel as if you are in a deep sleep. It will prevent you from feeling pain during the operation.

A tube about the size of a straw, called an arthroscope, is inserted into a small cut near the joint. The arthroscope has a light on it as well as a magnifying lens. A tiny camera is attached to the scope so the surgeon can see inside your knee by looking at a TV monitor. Other small tools can be inserted into other small cuts to repair the joint.

What happens after the procedure?

Arthroscopy is considered a minor surgical procedure and usually does not require a hospital stay. You can go home the same day as your surgery. The recovery time depends on the type of procedure. Even though the joint may not return to normal for a few weeks, you may be able to go back to your regular daily activities within a few days. Athletes having this surgery may be able to return to their sport within a few weeks depending on their particular situation. You may need to do physical therapy exercises for a few months to help make the joint strong again. Ask your healthcare provider when you can safely return to your daily activities and when you can start exercising again.

What are the benefits?

The recovery for arthroscopy is faster than if a full open incision were made to correct or diagnose the problem. Most people do very well after arthroscopy and have a rapid recovery.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

Complications are rare. Possible complications include:

- bleeding in the joint
- an infection in the joint
- a blood clot in a vein
- damage to the surrounding blood vessels or nerves
- too much swelling or bleeding
- damage to muscles, ligaments, tendons, or cartilage

When should I call my healthcare provider?

Call your healthcare provider during office hours if:

- your joint has signs of infection such as warmth, swelling, redness, or drainage
- you have a fever or chills
- you have numbness or severe swelling and pain
- you have bleeding
- there is increased tenderness in the joint