

# Arthroscopy

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## KEY POINTS

- Arthroscopy is joint surgery done with a scope put into your joint through small cuts. Arthroscopy is often done on the knee, shoulder, elbow, ankle, hip, and wrist joints.
  - Arthroscopy is used to diagnose or treat problems with bones, cartilage, ligaments, tendons, or bursa in your joints.
  - Ask your provider how long it will take to recover and how to take care of yourself at home.
  - Make sure you know what symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them.
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## What is an arthroscopy?

Arthroscopy is joint surgery done with a scope put into your joint through small cuts. Arthroscopy is often done on the knee, shoulder, elbow, ankle, hip, and wrist joints.

## When is it used?

Arthroscopy is used to diagnose or treat:

- Pain, stiffness, and swelling of the joints caused by arthritis
- Bone spurs or bone chips
- A damaged or torn meniscus. The meniscus is tissue that cushions the knee joint.
- Damaged or torn cartilage. Cartilage is the tissue that lines the surfaces of the knee joint.
- Torn ligaments and tendons. Ligaments are strong bands of tissue that connect one bone to another. Tendons are strong bands of tissue that attach muscle to bone.
- Irritation and swelling of a bursa. A bursa is a fluid-filled sac that acts as a cushion between bone and other tissues, such as skin, muscle, and tendons or ligaments.
- Joint infections

## How do I prepare for this procedure?

- Make plans for your care and recovery after you have the procedure. Find someone to give you a ride home after the procedure. Allow for time to rest and try to find other people to help with your day-to-day tasks while you recover.
- You may or may not need to take your regular medicines the day of the procedure. Tell your healthcare provider about all medicines and supplements that you take. Some products may increase your risk of side effects. Ask your healthcare provider if you need to avoid taking any medicine or supplements before the procedure.

- Tell your healthcare provider if you have any food, medicine, or other allergies such as latex.
- Your healthcare provider will tell you when to stop eating and drinking before the procedure. This helps to keep you from vomiting during the procedure.
- Follow your provider's instructions about not smoking before and after the procedure. Smokers may have more breathing problems during the procedure and heal more slowly. It's best to quit 6 to 8 weeks before surgery.
- Follow any other instructions your healthcare provider gives you.
- Ask any questions you have before the procedure. You should understand what your healthcare provider is going to do. You have the right to make decisions about your healthcare and to give permission for any tests or procedures.

### **What happens during the procedure?**

You will be given medicine called anesthesia to keep from feeling pain during the procedure. You may have:

- Local anesthesia, which numbs part of your body where you will have the procedure.
- General anesthesia, which relaxes your muscles and puts you into a deep sleep.

Your provider will make several small cuts near the joint. An arthroscope is a lighted tube with a camera. Your provider can put the scope and tools through the small cuts to find or repair damage to your joint. After the procedure your provider will close the small openings with one or two stitches or sticky tape.

### **What happens after the procedure?**

You can usually go home the same day as your surgery. You may need to do physical therapy exercises for a few months to help make the joint strong again.

Follow your healthcare provider's instructions. Ask your provider:

- How long it will take to recover
- When you can put weight on the joint
- If there are activities you should avoid and when you can return to normal activities
- How to take care of yourself at home
- What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them

Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup. Keep all appointments for provider visits or tests.

### **What are the risks of this procedure?**

Every procedure or treatment has risks. Some possible risks of this procedure include:

- You may have problems with anesthesia.
- You may have an infection, bleeding, or blood clots.

Ask your healthcare provider how these risks apply to you. Be sure to discuss any other questions or concerns that you may have.

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