

Patient Information Leaflet: Knee Arthroscopy Surgery



Please read this leaflet carefully before giving consent for surgery. It is important you understand the purpose, risks, benefits, and alternatives. Feel free to ask questions at any point.

What is Knee Arthroscopy?

Knee arthroscopy is a minimally invasive surgical procedure used to diagnose and treat conditions inside the knee joint. It involves inserting a small camera (arthroscope) into the knee through tiny incisions, allowing the surgeon to see and treat problems directly.

You will have 2-3 keyhole incisions around the knee. A camera is inserted to view inside the joint. Instruments may be used to trim or repair the damaged meniscus. The procedure takes around 30–45 minutes

It is typically performed as a day-case procedure, meaning you can usually go home the same day. Most patients go home a few hours later.

Why Am I having a Knee Arthroscopy?

You have been diagnosed with a meniscal tear—a common injury to the cartilage inside the knee. This can cause:

- Pain or clicking
- Swelling or stiffness
- Catching, locking, or giving way
- Difficulty with twisting movements or squatting

If non-operative treatments (like physiotherapy and medication) have not helped, arthroscopy may be advised to assess and treat the torn meniscus.

What are the Alternatives to Surgery?



Before deciding on surgery, the following non-surgical treatments are often considered:

- Rest and activity modification
- Physiotherapy and strengthening exercises
- Anti-inflammatory medications or painkillers
- Steroid injections (in selected cases)

However, these may not be effective for mechanical symptoms caused by a meniscal tear, particularly if the tear is unstable or catching.

Anaesthetic Options

- You will meet with the anaesthetist to discuss what's best for you:
- General anaesthetic: You are asleep during the procedure
- Spinal anaesthetic: Numbs you from the waist down

Our anaesthetic team will ensure you are as comfortable as possible throughout and after the operation.

Benefits of Knee Arthroscopy

- Direct visual diagnosis of joint problems
- Ability to treat the issue during the same procedure
- Relief of symptoms such as locking or catching
- Faster recovery compared to open surgery
- Small scars, less tissue trauma

Risks and Complications

While the risks are low, as with any operation there are potential complications:

- Infection
- Bleeding or swelling
- Blood clots (very rare for knee arthroscopy)
- Damage to nerves or blood vessels (extremely rare)
- Stiffness or continued pain
- Residual symptoms, especially if early arthritis is present
- Anaesthetic-related risks (e.g., allergic reaction)

It's important to note that while many people get relief from symptoms, arthroscopy may not eliminate all discomfort, particularly if there is background joint wear.

Recovery and Aftercare

- Same-day discharge is typical
- Crutches may be used for 1–3 days
- You can usually weight-bear as tolerated
- Ice and elevation help reduce swelling
- A physiotherapy plan will be given to help you regain movement and strength

Time off work, driving and activities

- Return to desk-based work: 1-2 weeks
- Manual jobs: 3–4 weeks (depending on duties)
- Driving: Typically, after 1–2 weeks, when you can safely control the car
- Sport and exercise: Light activity may resume after 4–6 weeks with guidance

Understanding and Giving Consent

It is important that you fully understand the reason for surgery, the alternatives, the benefits, and the potential risks. By consenting, you are also allowing your surgeon to use their judgement in providing the safest and most appropriate treatment for your knee. We want you to feel:

- Informed about your condition and treatment options
- Aware of both the benefits and limitations of surgery
- Confident that your questions have been answered
- Supported in making the decision that's right for you

Remember, consent is a process, not a one-time signature. You are free to ask questions or change your mind at any time before the operation.

Further Information

If you would like more details or wish to discuss anything in this leaflet, please contact my secretary on 01902936690 to arrange an appointment.