



I am having an Arthroscopy of my Knee

A knee arthroscopy is a type of keyhole surgery used both to diagnose and treat problems with the knee joint. The surgeon makes 2 to 3 little cuts in the knee and inserts a thin, metal tube about the length and width of a drinking straw that contains a light source and a camera into the knee. Images are sent from the arthroscope to a video screen so the surgeon is able to see inside the joint. It's also possible for tiny surgical instruments to be used alongside an arthroscope to allow the surgeon to treat certain joint conditions such as torn cartilage and ligaments, damaged joint surfaces.

This surgery is performed under general anaesthetic, as a day surgery case. After a recovery period of 2-3 hours you will go home.

What happens before my surgery?

Planning ahead is the key to having less stress and achieving the best outcome from your surgery. Recovering from knee arthroscopic surgery can take up to 6 weeks. You can take steps before surgery that will help make your recovery easier and faster. Having a positive attitude and looking forward to getting back a good quality of life is an important part of the recovery process.

Before your surgery, many people will be asking about your insurance coverage, medical history, and legal arrangements. You may feel that you are answering the same questions over and over again. If you have everything written down, you can reduce your frustration and speed the process.

You should be in the best possible health before your surgery. The physical preparations you can make, can affect both the outcome of the surgery, and your recovery time. Eat well and start some light exercise. If you are diabetic make sure you have clear instruction from your doctor about your medication. If you take **Blood Thinning** medication please let your surgeon know.



If you smoke, it is highly recommended that you quit or cut down, because smoking can change blood flow patterns and delay healing and slow recovery. If you drink, limit the amount of alcohol for at least 48 hours before surgery. If you are more than a social drinker please let your surgeon know to reduce the incidence of withdrawal.

Day Surgery Admission Process

As your admission is planned and to ensure that it is quick and easy, you must first register your details with the Day Surgery or Hospital well in advance of your planned admission date, through the Admission Call Centre. Make sure you have all the relevant information at hand e.g. Medicare, Private Health Care provider. The Admission Call Centre will then contact you closer to the date of admission to acknowledge your admission and confirm health fund details. You will then be contacted by an admission nurse to obtain your medical history and provide you with information

about your impending procedure and offers you the opportunity to ask questions about what to expect during your stay and remove the fear of the unknown.

What happens the day before my surgery?

The days before coming into hospital for your surgery are usually busy. Use this check list to make sure you don't forget anything.

- ☐ **Bring your Orthopaedics Toowoomba surgical folder as it contains your Consent Form completed by you and your surgeon.**
- ☐ **All X Rays and Scans**
- ☐ Your Medicare Card, Pension Card and Health Benefits Card.
- ☐ Your Pharmacy Benefits/Safety Net Card/Work Cover/Third party claim details/DVA Card.

The hospital will notify you with an admission time, where to arrive and a fasting time on this day. Fasting means no food or fluids after the time given. If you are required to take medication, take with a sip of water only.

- ☐ Shower prior to coming into hospital. Do not wear talcum powder, deodorant, perfumes or nail polish.
- ☐ Wear comfortable clothes that are easy to remove.
- ☐ Do not wear jewellery or bring valuables with you to hospital.
- ☐ Bring aids you usually require e.g. glasses, hearing aids, or walking aids, in good working order.

What happens while I am in Day Surgery?

On the day of your surgery please arrive punctually at the allocated time. Inform the reception staff of your arrival and they will check your admission details and make sure that all documentation is signed and witnessed. An admission nurse will discuss your past medical history, known allergies and current medication/s regime.

You will be changed into surgical attire and your operative knee shaved. You will then be taken to a waiting room where the anaesthetist will discuss with you your anaesthetic options and what to expect. At this time you will be asked the same questions over again by the theatre staff to check the side and site of surgery and if you have any allergies.

What happens during my surgery?

A knee arthroscopy will take at least 20-40 minutes, depending on how much work your surgeon needs to do inside your knee joint.

Once the anaesthetic has taken effect, a tourniquet is placed around your upper thigh. This stops the blood flow to your leg for a short time and allows your surgeon to operate in a blood free area. This gives him better visibility of knee structures during the procedure. Your surgeon will make small cuts in the skin around your knee. The arthroscope is inserted through these small incisions and sterile fluid is pumped into the knee. The knee is then examined by looking at images on a monitor. If surgical treatment is needed small instruments are used to remove any damaged cartilage or ligament tissue. The fluid is then drained out of the knee and cuts closed with stitches or adhesive strips and bandaged.

You will be transferred to the recovery room where your vital signs will be monitored. Once you are awake and aware you will be given something to eat and drink and pain relief. You should be able to go home within 1-2 hours.

Be sure to have someone with you to drive you home.

What happens when I go home?

It is likely that you'll feel tired and light-headed after having a general anaesthetic, so you'll need to ask a responsible adult to take you home and to stay with you for the first 24 hours following surgery. Most people will recover from the effects of the anaesthetic within 48 hours.

Make sure you elevate the leg and apply an ice pack to help with swelling when you get home. You should also carry out any joint exercises that have been recommended for you.

Any dressings will need to be kept as dry as possible, so you'll need to cover them with a plastic bag when having a bath or shower. If your dressings do get wet or fall off, they will need to be replaced. The dressings can usually be removed after 5 to 10 days. Your incision sites should start to heal within a few days.

The time it takes to recover from an arthroscopy can vary, depending on the amount of surgery required. The first week you can expect some discomfort. A small percentage of patients have a lot of pain. On discharge from the Day Surgery facility or hospital you will be given some instructions on wound care, pain relief and exercises. It is recommended that you follow these instructions. Each week you will progressively improve, and usually by 6 weeks you should be 90% healed. The last 10% can take several months.

Weight bearing is usually possible after surgery. If you feel that you require crutches the treating facilities will be able to help you organise this.

Driving is possible once the knee feels comfortable. Depending on the extent of surgery this may be after 24 hours or up to a week later.

You will be asked to make a follow-up appointment with your specialist 10-14 days post- surgery for wound review, and or removal of sutures. At this appointment you can discuss the results of the surgery, your recovery, and any additional treatment you may require.

What are the risks?

An arthroscopy is generally considered to be a safe procedure, but like all types of surgery it does carry some risks.

It's normal to experience short-lived problems such as swelling, bruising, stiffness and discomfort after an arthroscopy. These will usually improve during the days or weeks following the procedure.

More serious problems are much less common, occurring in less than 1 in 100 cases. They include:

- A blood clot that develops in one of the limbs- this is known as deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and it can cause pain and swelling in the affected limb
- Infection inside the joint-this is known as septic arthritis and it can cause a high temperature (fever), pain and swelling in the joint
- Bleeding inside the joint-which often causes severe pain and swelling
- Accidental damage to the nerves that are near the joint- this can lead to numbness and some loss of sensation, which may be temporary or permanent.