Arthroscopy of the Ankle

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This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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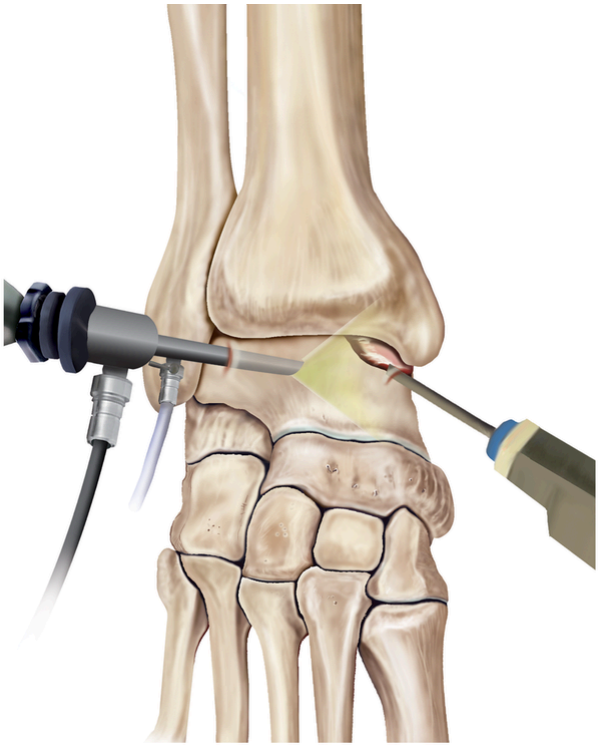
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What is an arthroscopy of your ankle?

An arthroscopy (keyhole surgery) allows your surgeon to see inside your ankle using a camera inserted through small cuts on your skin. Your surgeon can diagnose problems such as damage to the joint surface or ligaments, and arthritis.

An arthroscopy of the ankle



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What are the benefits of surgery?

The aim is to confirm exactly what the problem is and for many people the problem can be treated at the same time.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

Problems inside your ankle can often be diagnosed using a magnetic scan (MRI scan) but you may then need an arthroscopy to treat the problem.

Physiotherapy and anti-inflammatory painkillers such as ibuprofen can sometimes prevent or delay the need for an arthroscopy.

What will happen if I decide not to have the operation?

Damage inside your ankle does not usually heal without treatment, although sometimes your ankle will become less troublesome with time or after a course of physiotherapy.

What does the operation involve?

Various anaesthetic techniques are possible.

The operation usually takes 30 to 45 minutes.

Your surgeon will examine your ankle ligaments while you are under the anaesthetic and your muscles are completely relaxed. They will insert a small camera through one or more small cuts around your ankle.

They will wash out any loose material caused by wear of the joint surfaces. Your surgeon will remove any spurs of bone or swelling of the lining of your ankle joint.

If you have torn your ankle ligaments, you may need a reconstruction operation.

How can I prepare myself for the operation?

If you smoke, stopping smoking now may reduce your risk of developing complications and will improve your long-term health.

Try to maintain a healthy weight. You have a higher risk of developing complications if you are overweight.

Regular exercise should help to prepare you for the operation, help you to recover and improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

What complications can happen?

The healthcare team will try to reduce the risk of complications.

Any numbers which relate to risk are from studies of people who have had this operation. Your doctor may be able to tell you if the risk of a complication is higher or lower for you. Some risks are higher if you are older, obese, you are a smoker or have other health problems. These health problems include diabetes, heart disease or lung disease.

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Some complications can be serious and may even cause death.

General complications of any operation

- Pain.
- Bleeding during or after the operation. If you get a lot of blood in your knee (a haemarthrosis), it will be swollen and painful.
- Difficulty passing urine.
- Unsightly scarring of your skin.
- Infection of the surgical site (wound).
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication.
- Blood clot in your leg (deep-vein thrombosis – DVT).
- Blood clot in your lung (pulmonary embolus), if a blood clot moves through your bloodstream to your lungs.

Specific complications of this operation

- Damage to nerves around your ankle, leading to weakness, numbness or pain in your ankle or foot. This usually gets better but may be permanent.
- Compartment syndrome, where the calf muscles swell and get tight.
- Infection in your ankle joint. Infection can cause permanent damage.
- Severe pain, stiffness and loss of use of your ankle. Your ankle can take months or years to improve. Sometimes there is permanent pain and stiffness.
- Difficulty passing urine.

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day.

It is common for your ankle to be a little swollen for a few weeks.

Walking can be uncomfortable and you may need to take painkillers to help relieve your pain.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people make a good recovery and can return to normal activities.

Summary

An arthroscopy allows your surgeon to diagnose and treat some common problems affecting your ankle, without the need for a large cut on your skin. This may reduce the amount of pain you feel and speed up your recovery.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatment options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

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Illustrator

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