

Shoulder Arthroscopy: Before Your Surgery



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What is shoulder arthroscopy?

Shoulder arthroscopy is a type of surgery. It lets your doctor repair shoulder problems without making a large cut (incision).

To do this surgery, the doctor puts a lighted tube through small incisions in your shoulder. The tube is called an arthroscope or scope. Next, the doctor puts some surgical tools in the scope to help make any repairs. The incisions will leave scars that usually fade with time.

This type of surgery is used to treat many shoulder problems.

- **Osteoarthritis** happens when your cartilage breaks down. Cartilage is the hard, thick tissue that cushions the joints. For this problem, the doctor shaves and smooths rough surfaces on the shoulder joint.
- A **loose body** is a loose piece of bone or cartilage. It's often caused by an injury. The doctor may put the loose piece back in place. Sometimes the piece is removed.
- **Impingement syndrome** happens when shoulder tissue begins to swell and rub against a bone. This can occur in the tendons of the rotator cuff. Or it may happen in the tendons that connect the bicep to the shoulder. It can also occur in the bursa, the sac between the rotator cuff and the top of the shoulder blade. To fix this problem, your doctor removes the bursa and part of the bone from the point of your shoulder. This increases the space in the shoulder area. In a few weeks, the bursa re-forms.

Shoulder arthroscopy is also used for other problems. These include rotator cuff problems, bicep tendon tears, and shoulder instability. This information does not cover these surgeries.

Most people go home on the day of the surgery. When you can go back to work or your usual activities depends on your shoulder problem. You will probably need about 6 weeks or longer to recover.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments and call your doctor or nurse call line if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How do you prepare for surgery?

Surgery can be stressful. This information will help you understand what you can expect. And it will help you safely prepare for surgery.

Preparing for surgery

- Be sure you have someone to take you home. Anesthesia and pain medicine will make it unsafe for you to drive or get home on your own.
- Understand exactly what surgery is planned, along with the risks, benefits, and other options.
- If you take aspirin or some other blood thinner, ask your doctor if you should stop taking it before your surgery. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do. These medicines increase the risk of bleeding.
- Tell your doctor ALL the medicines and natural health products you take. Some may increase the risk of problems during your surgery. Your doctor will tell you if you should stop taking any of them before the surgery and how soon to do it.
- Make sure your doctor and the hospital have a copy of your advance care plan. If you don't have one, you may want to prepare one. It lets others know your health care wishes. It's a good thing to have before any type of surgery or procedure.

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What happens on the day of surgery?

- Follow the instructions exactly about when to stop eating and drinking. If you don't, your surgery may be cancelled. If your doctor told you to take your medicines on the day of surgery, take them with only a sip of water.
- Take a bath or shower before you come in for your surgery. Do not apply lotions, perfumes, deodorants, or nail polish.
- Do not shave the surgical site yourself.
- Take off all jewelry and piercings. And take-out contact lenses if you wear them

At the hospital or surgery center

- Bring a picture ID.
- The area for surgery is often marked to make sure there are no errors.
- You will be kept comfortable and safe by your anesthesia provider. The anesthesia may make you sleep. Or it may just numb the area being worked on.
- The surgery will take about 1 to 2 hours. It depends on what type of shoulder problem you have.

Going home

- Be sure you have someone to drive you home. Anesthesia and pain medicine make it unsafe for you to drive.
- You will be given more specific instructions about recovering from your surgery. They will cover things like diet, wound care, follow-up care, driving, and getting back to your normal routine.

When should you call your doctor?

- You have questions or concerns.
- You do not understand how to prepare for your surgery.
- You become ill before the surgery (such as fever, flu, or a cold).
- You need to reschedule or have changed your mind about having the surgery.

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