


Orthopaedic and Sports Injuries Services "OASIS"

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Elbow Arthroscopy Patient Information

The Procedure

- Arthroscopic surgery of the elbow is usually carried out under a general anaesthetic.
- The instrument used during an arthroscopy is called an arthroscope (a small telescope) which is connected to a television screen.
- The arthroscope is inserted through a small incision (10mm) in the back of your elbow.
- This allows the surgeon to access a clear image of the inside of the elbow and assess the extent of any damage.
- Once the extent of the damage has been determined further small incisions may be made to allow various specialist instruments to be inserted into the joint to trim and repair the damaged areas.
- During the operation a sterile solution is placed within the elbow joint to allow the optics of the arthroscope to work to a maximum advantage.
- At the end of the operation the elbow joint is washed out and the incisions closed
- Local anaesthetic is instilled into the elbow to provide pain relief in the immediate post-operative period.

Effects

- It is normal to feel slight discomfort within the elbow immediately after the procedure. However, the majority of patients will be able to bend the elbow to a limited extent.
- Power and flexibility should return over an 8-12 hour period following the procedure.
- You will be given pain relief whilst you are in hospital if you require it. You will also be given pain relief to take home. It is advisable to take the painkillers regularly as prescribed; this will also allow you to move your elbow easier.

Dressings

- The incision around your elbow will usually be closed using stitches. The stitches, if not dissolvable will normally need to be removed 10-14 days after your operation; this can be done by your practice nurse at the GP surgery.
- Your elbow will be covered with a wool dressing and crepe bandage. This dressing will need to remain in place until the surgeon has seen you and the nurse is ready

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to discharge you. Under the bandage the incision will be covered by a smaller adhesive dressing.

- A support bandage before you leave the hospital and this should remain in place for up to three days depending on the surgeon's/ nurse advice. The support can normally be removed when you are comfortable without it.
- You will need to keep your dressing/ wound dry for three to five days, after this time you may have light showers.
- After 10-14 days you can start bathing as long as your wound is completely healed.

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy is a vital part of the post-operative recovery. An out-patient referral will be made for you as Physiotherapists do not visit the Day surgery Unit.

Complications

- Complications from this procedure are very rare.
- Watch for any signs of infection; if you experience any of the following you should seek help:
 - The amount of pain in the wound increases after the obvious initial discomfort.
 - The amount of redness and/or swelling increases.
 - You may notice any unpleasant discharge.
- There will be swelling, this is normal and will generally settle down on its own with elevation and appropriate physiotherapy.

Returning to Work/ Driving

- Your comfort level should be your guide for returning to work. Most people are able to return to work within one to two weeks, but it does depend on the kind of work you do. The surgeon/nursing staff will be able to tell you how long you will require to stay off work for.
- Patients are normally advised not to drive for one week, driving is only allowed once you feel that you can control the car and that the elbow will allow you to turn the wheel in an emergency.

Sports Activities

- You will be advised as to when you are allowed to start sporting activities again after your operation. This time can be anything up to 12 weeks after your operation, depending on the complexity of the surgery.

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Follow-up Appointment

- Mr M Shah will usually come out and see you before you go home, and will also arrange to see you again in an out-patient clinic after approximately six to eight weeks. Your follow-up appointment will be sent to you in the post soon after your operation.

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