

Shoulder Arthroscopy

What is shoulder arthroscopy?

- Shoulder arthroscopy is 'keyhole' surgery to the shoulder
- A camera is placed inside the shoulder and any surgery inside the shoulder is done through small incisions in the skin

What conditions can it be used for?

- Removal of calcium deposits in the shoulder that cause ongoing pain
- Infection of the shoulder joint that needs to be drained and debrided
- Rotator cuff repair, biceps tenodesis, acromioplasty (see separate information sheet)
- Stabilization of a dislocating/unstable shoulder
- There are many others.

How does surgery work?

- This kind of surgery usually requires a general anaesthetic (being 'completely knocked out')
- Often the anaesthetist does a nerve block (that numbs and paralyses the arm for about 12 hours) to help with pain relief – it can be very painful surgery.
- Because it can be quite sore immediately after surgery - It is recommended to stay in hospital overnight
- Antibiotics is usually administered at the time of surgery, and may have to be continued after surgery in cases of infection

What do we do in surgery?

- Surgery usually takes about 1-2 hours
- But the whole process of going to theatre and waking up from surgery takes longer.
- Often the surgery is done with the help of a camera (arthroscopic, or 'keyhole').

- Sometimes a larger skin cut is needed to for successful surgery

After the Surgery?

In Hospital

- The wounds are dressed, and the arm is placed in a sling
- We often leave a pain catheter in the shoulder to deliver more local anaesthetic at about 10 hours after surgery (when the anaesthetist's nerve block starts to wear off)
- Do not hesitate to ask for pain killers. It is much better to 'stay on top of pain', than 'to catch' up when it is severe.
- It is usual to leave hospital the morning after surgery
- A physiotherapist will usually visit you in hospital to demonstrate gentle exercises.

At Home

- Continue to stay on top of your pain with oral pain killers.
- Do the gentle exercises that physiotherapist demonstrated in hospital. It is usually advised to see a physiotherapist in the community at around 2-4 weeks post surgery.
- It is OK to remove your sling to do these exercises. Your surgeon will let you know how long a sling needs to be used for.
- While the shoulder wounds are covered with waterproof dressings it is safe to have a shower. Please have the dressings replaced if they start to come loose.
- An appointment is usually made at my rooms to review your progress 1-2 weeks after the surgery
- Please do not drive before speaking to your physiotherapist or a doctor.

The recovery?

- The recovery **depends a lot on the kind of surgery required**. Please follow advice from your surgeon and physiotherapist carefully.
- A **sling** is usually worn, in some cases full time for up to 6 weeks
- From around 2 weeks on, a physiotherapist can show you how to start to progress your **range of motion exercises**.
- It can occasionally take up to a **year** to regain completely normal range of motion.

Time frames

- **Self care** (washing, dressing, eating) with the operated hand – usually around 1-6 weeks (a sling may still be needed) depending on the surgery.
- **Driving:** when you are able to control a steering wheel with your operated arm and you are not taking strong pain relief anymore (usually 4-8 weeks post surgery)

- **Office work** 2-6 weeks, manual work 3-6 months.
- **Golf, fishing, cycling etc.:** usually around 1-4 months, but it can be longer (6 months)

What can go wrong?

- **Infection** occurs rarely(1% of the time), but can be severe. It may need further operations, weeks in hospital. It can lead to a poor outcome.
- There may be **ongoing pain** from other worn out joints in the area, that were not obviously a problem at the time of doing the surgery.
- It is common to have a bit of **numbness next to the scar**. Very rarely, severe nerve damage can occur, resulting in paralysis or numbness in the arm.
- **Around 10-15% of the time** more than expected stiffness occurs in the shoulder (frozen shoulder). It can take 2 years or more to get better.
- Any repair that was done in the shoulder can fail, may not heal completely and cause ongoing pain in the shoulder.
- A **general anesthetic** can have complications, such as nausea, heart and lung problems. Please discuss it with your anesthetist before the operation.

What can you expect the final outcome to be?

- Most patients experience significant improvement in their shoulder pain and function.
- Mild discomfort and stiffness commonly persist despite successful surgery.
- Strength usually recovers, but it can take up to 1-2 years to reach maximal improvement.

FAQ

- How long will the surgery take / How long will I be in hospital?
 - about 2 hours, overnight
- -Which hospital?
 - The Sunshine Coast University Private Hospital
 - Or Kawana Private Hospital
- Anything I should do to prepare for surgery?
 - You should make sure that you have no pimples or skin breaks around your shoulder.

- if there are any pimples it should be washed with benzoil peroxide.
- Stop any drugs or supplements that may cause thinning of blood (anti inflammatories, fish oil etc.)
- Make sure that you have help at home for after surgery; you will need a sling for 6w and cannot drive for at least 6w
- don't smoke
- After care - showering, etc
 - as long as waterproof dressings are securely in place showering is safe
- Will I be in a sling?
 - yes for 6 weeks
- Worst case scenario
 - You can get a frozen shoulder that can take 2 years to recover.
 - The reconstruction can fail (and needs to be re done), or never be any good (uncommon in young healthy individuals.
 - Infection can make the shoulder worse than it is now, it may never recover (there is less than 1% risk of this happening)
 - Very rarely serious complications can occur from the anaesthetic, such as a stroke or heart attack.
- Rehab - Who / Where?
 - first month: gentle exercises as demonstrated in hospital by physio
 - After that please see a physiotherapist in the community to help with further rehabilitation.
- WC have requested a Medical table of costs – what is that?
 - We usually send a request for surgical approval to Workcover, it contains the item numbers(fees) that will be used.