

# Patient Information Sheet - Ankle Joint Arthroscopy

## *What do I need to know?*



### **What is Ankle Arthroscopy?**

Ankle arthroscopy is a surgical procedure used to examine the ankle joint using a video camera, through small “keyhole” incisions (cuts). These cuts allow passage of the camera and instruments to perform the procedure.

The procedure is recommended to treat problems inside the ankle joint such as:

- Removal of extra or loose bone
- Cleaning inflamed tissue
- Treating areas of cartilage damage
- Occasionally to assess the condition of the ankle joint to plan further surgery
- Arthroscopy can be performed at the same time as other procedures such as repairing damaged ankle ligaments.

---

### **Do I need an operation?**

You should have already tried non-surgical treatments. These may include footwear changes, braces, painkillers and walking aids. Ankle joint arthroscopy is only offered if you continue to have symptoms despite non-surgical treatments. You will be examined and counseled by a healthcare professional who will explain the risks and benefits of surgery to you.

---

### **What does the operation involve?**

The operation is performed as a day case procedure but come prepared in case you need to stay overnight. The operation is carried out under a general anesthetic & nerve block (numbing the nerves of the foot and ankle). Sometimes local anaesthetic is injected around the ankle when you are asleep to help relieve pain afterwards.

The operation involves two small “keyhole” incisions over the front of the ankle joint, sometimes with extra incisions at the back. The camera is introduced inside the joint and the ankle joint is inspected thoroughly to assess the joint surface and the condition of the ligaments. Further steps are added according to the indication of the procedure including removing loose fragments or drilling areas of cartilage damage to promote healing or to remove extra bone.

# Patient Information Sheet

## - Ankle Joint Arthroscopy

*What do I need to know?*



### What happens after surgery?

Generally, you will be able to walk on the ankle as soon as you have recovered from the anaesthetic. Your surgeon will tell you if you are not allowed to weight bear.

- No plaster cast is required, just a bandage which stays on for a couple of days
- Some people need crutches for a few days (they will be provided to you if needed)
- It is important to start moving the ankle as soon as possible to prevent stiffness and reduce the risk of clots in the leg
- It takes 10-14 days for wounds to heal, and you should try to keep the ankle up as much as possible during this time
- If you notice it becoming more swollen, elevate the leg and use a cold compress for 10-15 minutes.
- There will be a couple of stitches that should be removed in two weeks at your GP

### How long will it take to recover?

Recovery will depend on what procedures to the ankle are performed during surgery. Generally, most people take pain killers for a few days and can walk without a crutch or stick within a week. You may return to work when comfortable. If you mainly sit at work, you may be back within a week, if you are mainly on your feet, you may take four to six weeks. Return to sport generally takes between six weeks and three months. If an area of cartilage damage is found in the ankle, the damaged cartilage is removed and the base of it drilled to encourage the formation of new scar tissue. The recovery from this is variable and can take several months.

### Are there potential complications?

Every operation has potential complications. You must understand these before having surgery. These include but are not limited to:

- Infection
- Numbness over the top of the foot
- Chronic regional pain syndrome
- Clots in the leg (DVT)
- Clots in the lung (PE)
- Sensitive or painful scars

Smoking, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, steroids and blood thinning medication increase these risks significantly. Discuss these in more detail with your healthcare provider.