



UNDERSTANDING YOUR SURGERY

Elbow Arthroscopy

Overview

Elbow arthroscopy is keyhole surgery that uses a small camera and fine instruments inserted through several tiny incisions to look inside the elbow joint and treat problems there. It is used to remove loose fragments, trim worn or inflamed tissue, release stiffness, or treat early arthritis — with a smaller wound and quicker recovery than open surgery.

About Your Procedure

Why this surgery is recommended

- A locking or catching elbow from loose bodies (fragments of bone or cartilage)
- Stiffness or loss of movement that has not responded to physiotherapy
- Painful bony spurs or early arthritis (osteoarthritis)
- Inflamed joint lining or a diagnosis that needs direct inspection

What happens during surgery

- Several small keyhole incisions (portals) around the elbow
- A camera and fine instruments are used to inspect and treat the joint
- Loose fragments removed, worn tissue trimmed, or tight tissue released as needed
- The ulnar, radial and median nerves nearby are carefully protected
- General anaesthetic; usually a day procedure

After Your Surgery

- A light dressing or sling for comfort only — early movement is encouraged
- Gentle elbow movement begins within a day or two of surgery
- Physiotherapy starts early to prevent stiffness returning
- Keep the arm elevated for the first few days to control swelling
- No driving for **6 weeks** after surgery

Important precautions:

- Early movement is important — the elbow can stiffen quickly, so attend physiotherapy
- Some swelling and aching is normal for a few weeks as the joint settles
- Tingling or numbness in the hand or fingers should be reported promptly
- Recovery depends on what was treated inside the joint — your timeline may be individualised

Your Recovery at a Glance

WEEKS 0–2

Light dressing. Early gentle movement. Swelling control

WEEKS 2–6

Progressive range of motion and light strengthening

WEEKS 6–12

Strengthening and return to most daily activities

MONTHS 3–4

Return to sport and heavier manual work

QUESTIONS YOU MAY WISH TO ASK

- ? What does my recovery look like for my job or sport?
- ? What are the main risks, and how likely are they for me?
- ? What pain relief will I need, and for how long?
- ? When can I return to work, and is travel safe early on?

MY NOTES
