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Information Sheet

ANKLE ARTHROSCOPY

What is an ankle arthroscopy?

This is a procedure using keyhole surgery to treat conditions of the ankle joint. These include the removal of bone spurs, assessment and treatment of damage to the cartilage of the joint, the removal of loose fragments from the joint and reducing inflammation of the joint after an injury such as an ankle sprain.

How is an ankle arthroscopy performed?

The surgery itself is performed under general anaesthetic, although you will usually be discharged the same day. The ankle is positioned in a distraction device (see picture, right) and two small incisions are made at the front of the ankle. A small telescope is then inserted into one of the incisions, and instruments such as shavers and burrs can be inserted in the other. The joint surfaces are assessed, and any abnormality found can be dealt with. Occasionally, the arthroscopy is combined with further procedures, such as ligament stabilisation, if this is necessary.



An ankle arthroscopy being performed.

What is the recovery?

In general, recovery is very quick. Usually, you are discharged the same day, and will have bandages around the ankle. Unless specific procedures have been carried out on the cartilage of the joint, you will be able to put weight through the ankle, although it may be sore for a few days. The stitches are removed at two weeks and if all is well at that point, you should be able to get back to your usual activities, including driving.

Are there any potential complications?

There are risks with all surgical procedures. The risks after keyhole surgery are, however, much lower than with conventional open procedures. As with all surgery, there is a small risk of complications from the anaesthetic, although using modern techniques, this risk is very low.

There are also general risks that go with having any procedure, such as infection, pain, blood clots, swelling, nerve damage, which can cause numbness, blood vessel damage and a failure to cure your symptoms. The advantage of keyhole surgery, however, is that these risks are low, and there is always the option for further open surgery if keyhole treatment fails.