

Patient Information



Wrist arthroscopy (keyhole surgery)

A wrist arthroscopy is a form of keyhole surgery where a surgeon uses a small camera (arthroscope) to look inside and examine the wrist.

Why is it done?

If your surgeon thinks you have a problem inside your wrist joint, they may wish to look inside. This allows them to see most of the small bones of the wrist as well as the ligaments and allows them to look for damage or inflammation. Arthroscopy can be used to both diagnose and treat the wrist problem.

There are an increasing number of treatments that can be performed using an arthroscope including trimming or repairing torn cartilage, removing loose bodies, removing inflamed lining of the joint, and removing arthritic bone overgrowth.

Surgery

Before you come into hospital for your surgery, please make sure that you have removed all jewellery, especially rings on the arm/ hand that is to be operated on. Also please take off any nail varnish, gel or false nails.

The surgery is a day case procedure usually under either a regional (just the arm numb) or a general anaesthetic (asleep). It usually takes about 30



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minutes, but if other procedures are needed it may be much longer. Approximately three to six small 3mm incisions are made on the back of the wrist to allow the camera and instruments inside. Care is taken not to injure the tendons and nerves just under the skin. After the arthroscopy, the skin is closed (stitches or sticky stitches) and a bulky dressing is applied.

What are the risks?

There is a small chance of the following problems:

- Swelling
- Infection (less than 1%)
- Stiffness
- Numbness
- Tendon or nerve injury (uncommon)
- A rare, exaggerated pain response (less than 1%)

When can I drive and how long will I be off work?

It is your responsibility to ensure you are safe to drive. However, we advise you will need someone to drive you home, and you refrain from driving for the first 2 weeks following the operation. You can discuss this further with your treating clinician if you remain unsure. You may only return to driving when you are in full control of your vehicle and can take evasive action in an emergency. Occasionally, a plaster will be required after surgery. In this case, you will not be safe to drive until after the plaster is removed.

Returning to work will depend on your type of job: light or desk-based work may be possible at 2 to 3 weeks, while resumption of heavy manual labour may require waiting 4 to 6 weeks. You should be able to perform most everyday activities with any splints or strapping that may have been provided. Again, please speak to your treating clinician about this, and do not resume sporting activities until you are told that it is safe to do so.

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Further information

The day surgery unit can be contacted on 02476 966861 / 02476 966868 (University Hospital), or on 01788 663264 (Hospital of St. Cross). For further information please visit our hand service's web site at www.uhcwhand.org, or contact:

- Our plaster room technicians at Hospital of St. Cross on 01788 669143
- Our plaster room technicians at University Hospital Coventry on 02476 96909
- Hand Therapy at University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire on 02476 966016
- Hand Therapy at Hospital of St. Cross, Rugby on 01788 663257
- Our specialist hand surgery nurse / hand-coordinator on 02476 965072

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 02476 966861 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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