



Buckinghamshire Hand Surgeon

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Wrist arthroscopy information sheet

What is it?

Arthroscopy, or “keyhole” surgery as it is commonly known, is a minimally invasive technique that allows a very accurate and detailed assessment of your wrist joint.

Why is it carried out?

Wrist arthroscopy is performed in patients who have had an injury or damage to the wrist joint surface or the soft tissue structures within the wrist. It allows closer inspection of the structures allowing Andy to gauge the degree of damage and plan further treatment and as such, it is a largely diagnostic procedure.

Some treatments can be carried out during keyhole surgery to the wrist such as removing excess scar tissue or damaged cartilage.

Do I need any further investigations?

YES. All patients require x-rays and most have MRI or CT scans prior to wrist arthroscopy.

What does the procedure involve?

Wrist arthroscopy is carried out under general anaesthetic as a day case procedure. 4 small cuts about 5mm long are made on the back of the wrist to allow access to the many joints with a tiny camera and other instruments. The joint is then dilated with water to improve the view.

How long will it take to recover?

After the operation, the wounds are closed with small sutures and dressings and a bandage are applied. You will be given a sling to keep your wrist elevated and help reduce swelling.

You will be reviewed at 2 days by your hand therapist who will take down the bandage and get your wrist moving.

The sutures are removed at 10-12 days

What are the potential complications?

- **Infection** - Uncommon and usually treated very successfully with antibiotics.
- **Delayed healing**- Smokers and those with diabetes are more prone to this.
- **Painful/ Tender Scars**- the vast majority of patients complain of some discomfort around the scar and thumb, this is know as pillar pain and generally resolves with time. Rigorous wound care and desensitization as directed by your hand therapist help prevent this.
- **Damage to surrounding structures**- inadvertent damage or stretching to surrounding nerves may cause some numbness around the scars, although this should improve with time.
- **Stiffness**- Operations to the hand cause stiffness; this can be minimized by working closely with your hand therapist.
- **CRPS**- An uncommon but potentially serious complication of hand surgery leading to pain, stiffness, swelling and discomfort. It is impossible to predict this problem but working closely with you hand therapist and getting your hand moving early has been proven to significantly reduce the risk of this.

When can I get back to normal activities?

The wrist **MUST** be kept clean and dry for **10 days** until the sutures are removed. Most people should be able to return to "desk job" type activities within **1 week** of the operation. Any **manual work, heavy lifting or sporting activities** should be avoided for at least **2-4 weeks**. You may return to **driving** in around **1-2 weeks**

Please inform your insurance company that you have recent hand surgery to ensure that are happy for you to do so.