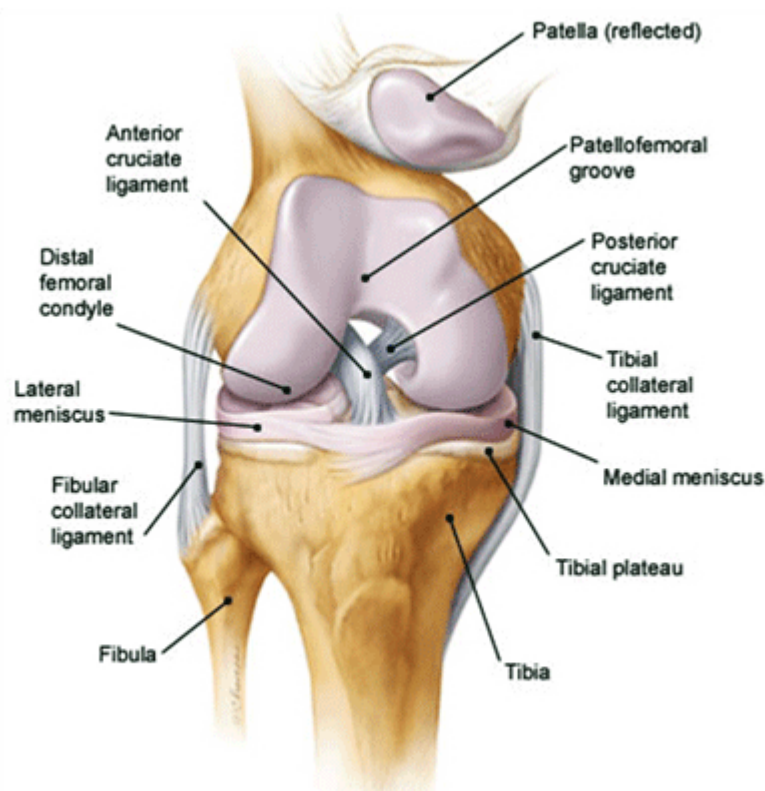


Knee Arthroscopy

An arthroscopy or “key hole surgery” allows the surgeon to look at the joint surfaces (smooth articular cartilage), the meniscus (horse-shoe shaped shock absorbers) and the main ligaments within the knee (cruciates) and to treat and debride (shave or smooth) damaged structures.

It is performed by inserting a camera into the knee through 2 or 3 small incisions. The procedure normally takes 30-60 minutes under either general anaesthetic or spinal epidural as a day-case procedure. Occasionally an overnight stay is required if additional procedures are performed.



Depending on what the surgeon finds the following may be performed:

- **MENISECTOMY** removal of a small part of the damaged shock absorbing meniscus. Commonly damaged through a twisting injury or “wear and tear”. If a larger portion of the meniscus needs to be trimmed the rate of arthritis may increase with physical activity over the coming years.
- **CHONDROPLASTY** involves shaving or trimming localised damaged areas to the kneecap (patella) and the medial or lateral joint surfaces.
- **MICROFRACTURE** involves placing 2-3mm holes in exposed areas of bone where the cartilage has been lost. This “stimulates” bone marrow stem cells to attempt to grow and cover the painful bone with new “scar” cartilage.
- **REMOVAL** of loose bodies (ie. Debris from the joint)

What happens after the arthroscopy?

The arthroscopy wounds are closed with small sticky dressings (steristrips) or occasionally stitches, and the knee will be wrapped in a crepe bandage.

After recovery from the anaesthetic you will be able to walk taking all your weight on your operated leg – unless directed otherwise by your physiotherapist.

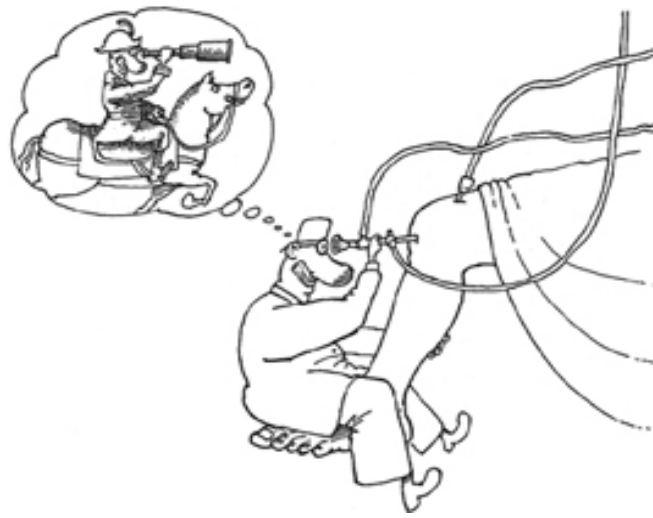
The physiotherapist will also provide you with some exercises before going home.

The steristrips should be left on the knee for at least 5 days or until they fall off to allow the wounds to heal. If you have stitches these will need to be removed after 7-10 days.

You can shower after 5 days and get the dressings wet, but if the steristrips fall off earlier you may need to cover the wounds with a waterproof plaster.

The knee may ache and swell and you will probably need to take some painkillers as advised.

Ice packs can be used to help reduce the swelling. Protect the skin by wrapping the ice pack in a damp towel and apply if needed every hour for 20 minutes.



Recovery after an arthroscopy

You will be seen in the ward and as an outpatient following the procedure so the operation can be discussed with you. Recovery time is variable and depending on the work done the inflammation and swelling can last for 2-3 months.

You will be seen by the physiotherapist after 1-2 weeks to assess you and provide you with an on-going specific rehabilitation programme. If you have had complex knee problems or additional procedures performed your recovery may take longer

Returning to Driving?

You may consider driving after 3-4 days. However do NOT drive unless you are happy that you are safe and can perform an emergency stop. It may be in your interest to inform your insurance that you are resuming driving after an operation.

Returning to Work?

If your job is strenuous and involves climbing or squatting then you probably need 3 weeks off work to recover.

Office type or sedentary work normally requires up to 2 weeks.

If you have had a microfracture you often require crutches and will need on average 6 weeks off heavy work and commuting.

Returning to Sports?

Strenuous physical activity and sport can be resumed usually after 2-3 weeks, when your knee is feeling strong and comfortable and is no longer swollen. You will need to gradually increase your activity levels to see how the knee copes. Returning to competitive sports takes about 6 weeks and you should make sure you can hop, squat and sprint with changes of direction and sudden stops and starts – all without undue pain.

If you have had a microfracture you will be advised to refrain from running and impact sports for 3 months to allow healing of the newly formed cartilage.



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