



Arthroscopic Shoulder Surgery for the Treatment of Shoulder Arthritis and Related Problems

Pre-Operative Patient Information

Diagnosis

Your arthritic shoulder is causing you pain. The cartilage cushioning the end of the ball and socket has worn away over time, leaving you with raw bone rubbing against raw bone. The pain has caused you to limit use of your arm, and tough, gristle-like scar tissue has developed. It has formed deep in your shoulder, affecting your ligaments and tendons, which should remain elastic and stretch as you move your shoulder. Scar tissue prevents this, further limiting movement.

Why Surgical Treatment is Recommended

Shoulder surgery is medically indicated based on the details you provided, your physical examination and a review of X-rays or other tests. Persistent pain that interferes with your daily activities, work or sports is also an indication for surgery.

Alternative Treatment Options

While we believe surgery is the best course of action, it is important to note that other treatments are available. These range from simply living with the condition to physical therapy exercises or medication. While any of these options may work for awhile, their reliability is uncertain. It is likely your condition will slowly worsen over time.

The Procedure

Using an arthroscope and two or three one-half inch incisions, we are able to remove scar tissue and lengthen any ligaments and tendons that have tightened. This allows your shoulder to move more easily. We also create more space between the ball and socket by removing a thin layer of bone.

Anesthesia

General anesthesia is appropriate for this type of surgery. It is the only reliable method that allows us to work deep inside your shoulder. The anesthesiologist also injects a type of Novocain just above your collarbone to help decrease pain in your shoulder after surgery.

What to Expect Post-Op

You awaken in the recovery room following surgery. We use a pillow to support your arm and an ice pack to help control any pain and swelling. Although nothing will completely eliminate your pain, medication and an ice pack help keep you as comfortable as possible. You are able to go home approximately one to three hours after surgery.

Potential Complications

Because shoulder surgery is a complex and delicate process designed to repair damaged structures deep inside the body, complications are possible. Although rare, the most common complication involves injury to nerves around the shoulder. This occurs in less than two percent of patients. It is generally caused by pressure and usually goes away within two days to six weeks. Permanent injury that results in decreased use, function or feeling can also occur, but it is exceedingly rare. Infection occurs in less than one out of 200 patients and may require antibiotics or surgery.

Success Rate

No shoulder operation is 100 percent successful for every person, but our procedures are reliable and help to restore potential function in your shoulder. The operations are most successful at relieving pain. Whether you return to your previous level depends on the damage to your shoulder, how well it heals, how well you rehabilitate and how strenuous your desired level of work or sports. Because of so many variables, we can make no guarantees other than to assure you that we will deliver the best medical care possible.

Pain Medication

You will receive a prescription for pain medication, which you may have filled at the pharmacy of your choice. Take the medicine as directed and as needed for pain. You may find that, after the first day, simple rest, arm repositioning and an ice pack effectively control your pain. Should you need more medication, have your pharmacy call our office before 4 p.m. for a prescription refill. Note that we cannot refill narcotic medication on weekends. One of our physicians is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, but we ask that you restrict any after-hours or weekend calls to emergencies only.

Returning to Normal Activity

You will be able to use your fingers, wrist and elbow immediately after surgery. You may bathe with regular soap and water 24 hours following the procedure, but be sure the surgery site or bandage does not get wet. You may shower normally after your first post-op visit. **Do not change your bandage before then, unless instructed to do so by our office.** You may gently use your arm in front of your body as soon as possible. It is OK to walk outdoors, write, cook and drive a car within a few days. But, remember, you may not drive while you are taking pain medication. Let pain be your guide when using your arm for various movements and activities. Once you are comfortable, you may use your arm and shoulder for any activities you choose.

Returning to Work

While we are unable to offer fixed rules, we can provide the following guidelines for easing your return to work. For most sedentary jobs, we recommend taking one or two weeks off following the procedure. Within two weeks after surgery, most patients can begin light-duty work that involves no lifting, pushing, pulling or carrying more than two pounds. Waist-level work or lifting of five to ten pounds may begin two months after surgery. You will generally need three to six months of recovery before beginning occasional work at shoulder level. Return to heavy lifting or overhead use may require anywhere from six to twelve months.

Rehabilitation

Should we order you a Continuous Passive Motion (CPM) machine, which is specially designed to correctly move your arm, you will begin using it the afternoon or evening of your surgery. We will order the CPM machine only if we believe your outcome will be positively affected by its use. A representative will contact you to schedule home delivery, check with your insurance carrier about coverage and discuss terms with you.

We order the CPM machine for two weeks to be used four times a day for one hour each session. You may stop during a session if needed. You may use an ice pack in between to control any pain and swelling.

We will discuss physical therapy when you return for your post-op visit. Typically, some physical therapy is needed post-operatively. Please check your insurance benefits to determine the number of treatments covered under your policy.



Post-Operative Visits

We schedule your first post-op visit for three to four days after surgery to examine the incision and remove your bandage. Again, do not remove the bandage until this visit. At that time, we provide additional instructions for exercises and discuss your permitted activity level. Your next visit occurs two to three weeks later, depending upon your symptoms. Office visits then occur three, six and twelve months following your surgery. At each visit, we evaluate your progress and share specific exercises designed to maximize motion, strength and coordination. Your surgery outcome depends on a continual evaluation process. Regular office visits are critical to your care. And, it is important that you, your surgeon and your therapist work together.

Surgical Costs

Because insurance benefits vary and there are no fixed rules for coverage, be sure to check with your insurance provider before your shoulder surgery. Please direct any questions about hospital, X-ray, laboratory and anesthesia charges to the hospital billing office. We will be happy to supply any information you need. We will also contact your insurance carrier, but doing so does not guarantee payment.

Pre-Operative Testing and Evaluation

Although we're operating on your shoulder, your entire body reacts to the anesthesia and surgery. Please see your family physician within seven days of your scheduled procedure for a pre-op examination. The surgical facility will contact you to schedule required testing based on your age and medical history. You will also need to see an anesthesiologist before surgery. He or she will inform us of any medical issues.

Scheduling Surgery

Contact us at (513) 985-3700 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. We will make every effort to schedule your surgery at a time that is convenient for you.