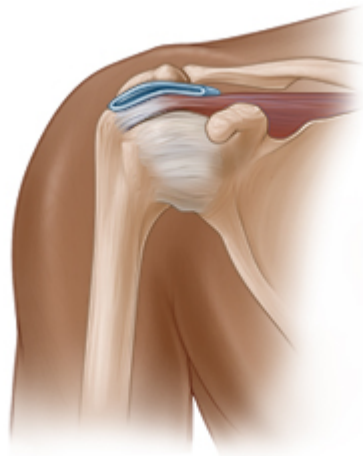


Shoulder Arthroscopy: What to Expect at Home



Your Recovery

Arthroscopy is a way to find problems and do surgery inside a joint without making a large cut (incision). Your doctor put a lighted tube with a tiny camera—called an arthroscope, or scope—and surgical tools through small incisions in your shoulder.

Your arm may be in a sling. You will feel tired for several days. Your shoulder will be swollen. And you may notice that your skin is a different color near the cuts the doctor made (incisions). Your hand and arm may also be swollen. This is normal and will go away in a few days. Depending on the medicine you had during the surgery, your entire arm may feel numb or like you can't move it. This goes away in 12 to 24 hours.

How soon you can go back to work or your usual routine will depend on your shoulder problem. Most people need 6 weeks or longer to recover. How much time you need depends on the surgery that was done. You may have to limit your activity until your shoulder strength and range of motion are back to normal. You may also be in a rehabilitation program (rehab).

If you have a desk job, you may be able to go back to work a few days after the surgery. If you lift things at work, it may take months before you can go back.

This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take for you to recover. But each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to get better as quickly as possible.

How can you care for yourself at home?



Activity

- Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover. You may be more comfortable if you sleep in a reclining chair. To make your arm and shoulder feel better, keep a thin pillow under the back of your arm while you are lying down.

- Try to walk each day. Start by walking a little more than you did the day before. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk. Walking boosts blood flow and helps prevent pneumonia and constipation.
- For 2 to 3 weeks, avoid lifting anything heavier than a plate or a glass. You need to give your shoulder time to heal.
- Your arm may be in a sling. You may need to use the sling for a few days to a few weeks. Your doctor will advise you on how long to wear the sling.
- You may take the sling off when you dress or wash.
- Do not use your arm for repeated movements. These include painting, vacuuming, or using a computer.



Diet

- You can eat your normal diet. If your stomach is upset, try bland, low-fat foods like plain rice, broiled chicken, toast, and yogurt.
- Drink plenty of fluids, unless your doctor tells you not to.
- You may notice that your bowel movements are not regular right after your surgery. This is common. Try to avoid constipation and straining with bowel movements. You may want to take a fiber supplement every day. If you have not had a bowel movement after a couple of days, ask your doctor about taking a mild laxative.



Medicines

- Your doctor will tell you if and when you can restart your medicines. He or she will also give you instructions about taking any new medicines.
- If you take aspirin or some other blood thinner, ask your doctor if and when to start taking it again. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do.
- Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
 - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- If you think your pain medicine is making you sick to your stomach:
 - Take your medicine after meals (unless your doctor has told you not to).
 - Ask your doctor for a different pain medicine.
- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.



Incision care

- If you have a dressing over your incision, keep it clean and dry. You may remove it 2 to 3 days after the surgery.

- If your incision is open to the air, keep the area clean and dry.
- If you have strips of tape on the incision, leave the tape on for a week or until it falls off.



Exercise

- You may need rehabilitation. This is a series of exercises you do after your surgery. Rehab helps you get back your shoulder's range of motion and strength. You will work with your doctor and physical therapist to plan this exercise program. To get the best results, you need to do the exercises correctly and as often and as long as your doctor tells you.



Ice

- To reduce swelling and pain, put ice or a cold pack on your shoulder for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Do this every 1 to 2 hours. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).
- You have severe trouble breathing.
- You have sudden chest pain and shortness of breath, or you cough up blood.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your hand is cool, pale, or numb, or it changes color.
- You are unable to move your fingers, wrist, or elbow.
- You are sick to your stomach or cannot keep fluids down.
- You have pain that does not get better after you take pain medicine.
- You have signs of infection, such as:
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
 - Red streaks leading from the incision.
 - Pus draining from the incision.
 - A fever.
- You have loose stitches, or your incision comes open.
- Your incision bleeds through your first dressing or is still bleeding 3 days after your surgery.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your sling feels too tight, and you cannot loosen it.
- You have new or increased swelling in your arm.
- You have new pain that develops in another area of the affected limb. For example, you have pain in your hand or elbow.
- You do not have a bowel movement after taking a laxative.
- You do not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **E061** in the search box to learn more about "**Shoulder Arthroscopy: What to Expect at Home**".

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