

Potential risks for arthroscopic shoulder and elbow surgery

Anaesthesia

Complications are not common but may occur. Please discuss any questions regarding anaesthesia complications with the anaesthetist who will see you before surgery. Please tell the anaesthetist if you are allergic to any medication or if you are currently taking any medication.

Infection

Precautions taken to prevent infection include special skin preparation, sterile techniques and the use of antibiotics where appropriate. However, if infection does occur, it may mean further surgery or hospitalisation.

Excessive bleeding or swelling

Swelling arises as a result of the fluid used during the arthroscopic procedure and it usually clears up within a few hours after the operation. Bleeding that may occur is usually in the form of spots on bandages. In some cases, excessive blood collection in the shoulder or elbow joint must be removed.

Contracture of the joint

The joint capsule around the ligaments can respond to the operation and restrict the mobility of the shoulder for a period after such a procedure. This contracture can sometimes continue for 2 to 3 months after surgery. It usually clears up completely. An exercise program for such contractures is initiated from shortly after the procedure but the degree of such a contracture varies from person to person. Need for further surgery to clear such a contracture is rarely needed.

Breaking of tools

It is possible that a portion of a small surgical instrument may break down within the joint. This complication is rare and if it happens it can usually be removed with arthroscopic techniques. In some cases an incision may be needed to remove the part of a tool.

Nerve damage

A few smaller nerves and some very important nerves cross the joint where the surgery is done and can be damaged by an arthroscopic procedure. This complication is rare, but when it happens it can have serious consequences that may require additional treatment.

Loss of sensation or pain

Small sensory nerves lie directly under the skin near the incision areas for arthroscopy. During the incision it is possible to damage these small nerves with the result of an area of

sensory loss or a focused area of pain and skin sensitivity. These symptoms usually clear up over time.