

Arthroscopic Subacromial Decompression

What Is Arthroscopic Subacromial Decompression?

Arthroscopic subacromial decompression is a type of keyhole shoulder surgery used to treat impingement syndrome — a condition where the tendons of your rotator cuff become pinched under the top of the shoulder blade (acromion). This can lead to pain, inflammation, and difficulty moving your shoulder.

The procedure aims to create more space in the subacromial area by trimming bone and soft tissue, reducing pressure on the tendons and helping you move your arm more comfortably.

When Is Surgery Needed?

You may be offered arthroscopic subacromial decompression if:

- You have ongoing shoulder pain from impingement that hasn't improved with physiotherapy or steroid injections
- You find it difficult to lift your arm or perform overhead activities
- Your symptoms affect your sleep or day-to-day life
- Your scan shows evidence of narrowing in the subacromial space or tendon irritation

Most people try non-surgical treatments first. Surgery is considered when these are not effective.

What Does The Surgery Involve?

The operation is done under general anaesthetic and typically takes around 30 to 60 minutes. During the procedure:

- Small incisions are made around your shoulder
- A camera (arthroscope) is inserted to view the joint
- The surgeon removes any inflamed tissue or bony spurs
- The underside of the acromion may be smoothed or partially shaved

This creates more space for the rotator cuff to move freely, reducing pain and improving shoulder function.

Recovery And Rehabilitation

You can usually go home the same day. A sling may be worn for comfort but is not always needed. Physiotherapy will start soon after surgery to restore movement and strength.

Most people can:

- Return to desk work within 1 to 2 weeks
- Resume light activity by 4 to 6 weeks
- Return to sport or physical work by 2 to 3 months

It's important to follow your rehab plan and avoid heavy lifting or overhead activity too early.

Risks And Complications

Like all procedures, there are some risks, including:

- Infection
- Shoulder stiffness or ongoing pain
- Bleeding or swelling
- Injury to nearby nerves or tendons
- Incomplete relief of symptoms

Most people experience good results, especially when combined with physiotherapy.

Will My Shoulder Go Back To Normal?

The goal of surgery is to reduce pain and restore function. Many people return to full activity within a few months. However, recovery can vary depending on the severity of your original condition and your rehabilitation.

Why Choose Midlands Orthopaedic Clinic?

At Midlands Orthopaedic Clinic, our experienced shoulder surgeons use the latest arthroscopic techniques to ensure safe, effective treatment for impingement syndrome and other shoulder conditions. We offer rapid diagnosis, clear guidance, and a personalised approach to your care.

Our team works closely with physiotherapists to support your recovery and get you back to the activities you love, whether that's work, sport, or everyday life.

Get In Touch

If you're struggling with shoulder pain or have been told you might need subacromial decompression, we're here to help. Contact Midlands Orthopaedic Clinic today to book your consultation.