

# Elbow Open Debridement Surgery (For Elbow Arthritis)

## What Is Elbow Open Debridement?

Elbow open debridement is a surgical procedure used to treat **moderate to severe arthritis of the elbow**, especially when the joint is stiff, painful, or contains large bony growths (osteophytes). The aim is to remove damaged tissue, smooth out rough bone surfaces, and restore movement and function.

Unlike keyhole surgery, open debridement involves a larger incision to allow full access to the joint. It is often recommended when arthroscopy isn't sufficient due to the extent of damage.

## When Is Surgery Needed?

You may be offered open debridement of the elbow if:

- You have elbow arthritis causing significant pain and stiffness
- Bone spurs are blocking movement or causing locking
- Your symptoms haven't improved with physiotherapy, injections, or arthroscopy
- You need more movement to carry out daily tasks or work
- You are not yet ready or suitable for elbow replacement surgery

The goal is to reduce pain and improve range of motion, especially in younger or more active patients who want to delay joint replacement.

## What Does The Surgery Involve?

The procedure is performed under general anaesthetic and takes around 1 to 2 hours. It typically involves:

- A curved incision over the back or side of the elbow
- Removal of bone spurs (osteophytes)
- Smoothing of rough joint surfaces
- Removal of thickened joint lining (synovium)
- Breaking down scar tissue and freeing up joint movement

Sometimes, your surgeon may also remove loose bodies or trim damaged cartilage. You'll usually stay in hospital for a day or overnight.

## Recovery And Rehabilitation

Recovery from open elbow debridement takes longer than keyhole surgery due to the larger incision and more extensive work. You may wear a splint or sling for a few days, and physiotherapy will begin shortly after surgery.

Typical recovery includes:

- Return to light activity or desk work in 2 to 4 weeks
- Resuming gentle arm use by 6 weeks
- Return to manual work or sport in 3 to 6 months, depending on your progress

Physiotherapy plays a key role in maintaining movement and preventing stiffness after surgery.

## Risks And Complications

As with any surgery, there are potential risks, including:

- Infection
- Bleeding or wound problems
- Injury to nerves around the elbow
- Ongoing pain or stiffness
- Joint instability (rare)
- Incomplete relief of symptoms

Your surgeon will explain these risks and discuss your individual case before the procedure.

## What Results Can I Expect?

Elbow open debridement can significantly improve pain, motion, and function in the right patients. Results are best in individuals with mechanical symptoms and limited joint damage. While it won't cure arthritis, it can delay the need for joint replacement and help you stay active for longer.

## Why Choose Midlands Orthopaedic Clinic?

Our expert elbow surgeons at Midlands Orthopaedic Clinic specialise in the treatment of complex elbow conditions, including arthritis. We use advanced imaging and surgical techniques to ensure safe, effective care, and tailor each procedure to your lifestyle and goals.

With rapid access to diagnostics, expert-led physiotherapy, and personalised aftercare, we'll guide you through every step of your treatment and recovery.

## Get In Touch

If you're living with painful, stiff elbows and want to explore your surgical options, we're here to help. Contact Midlands Orthopaedic Clinic today to book your consultation with an experienced elbow specialist.