

Stabilisation Of An Unstable Elbow

What Is The Stabilisation Of An Unstable Elbow?

Stabilisation of an unstable elbow is a surgical procedure aimed at restoring stability, function, and strength to the elbow joint that has become unstable, often due to injury, dislocation, or underlying conditions affecting the ligaments or bones.

What Are The Symptoms Of An Unstable Elbow?

- Pain in the elbow, especially when attempting to use the arm or lift objects.
- A feeling of the elbow “giving way” or being unable to support the arm’s weight.
- Limited range of motion, difficulty bending or straightening the elbow
- Swelling and bruising around the elbow
- A popping or clicking sensation within the elbow joint.

What Does The Procedure Involve In Stabilisation?

The specific technique used for elbow stabilisation can vary depending on the cause and extent of the instability but typically involves one or more of the following:

- Ligament Repair or Reconstruction: Damaged or torn ligaments are either sutured back together or reconstructed using grafts from other parts of the body or from donor tissue.
- Bone Fixation: If the instability is due to a fracture, broken bone pieces are realigned and fixed in place using screws, plates, or wires.
- Joint Capsule Tightening: The joint capsule can be tightened or plicated to reduce excessive movement and improve stability.
- Arthroscopy: In some cases, the procedure can be performed using arthroscopy, which involves smaller incisions and the use of a camera to guide the surgery.

What Are The Possible Risks And Complications?

- Infection
- Nerve damage, potentially leading to numbness, weakness, or altered sensation in the arm or hand.
- Blood vessel damage
- Limited range of motion or stiffness in the elbow
- Recurrent instability, if the repaired structures fail to heal properly or are re-injured.
- Pain at the site of surgery

What Happens After Surgery?

- Immobilisation: The elbow may be immobilised in a splint or cast for a period to allow the tissues

to heal.

- **Physical Therapy:** Rehabilitation will start after the initial healing phase, focusing on gentle exercises to improve flexibility and gradually increase strength.
- **Gradual Return to Activities:** Return to full activities can vary, typically taking several weeks to months. The timeline depends on the severity of the initial instability, the specific procedures performed, and the patient's progress in physical therapy.
- **Follow-up Care:** Regular follow-up appointments will be necessary to monitor the elbow's healing and functionality.