

# Stiff Elbow Release Surgery

## What Is A Stiff Elbow?

A stiff elbow, also known as elbow stiffness or contracture, refers to limited range of motion and reduced flexibility in the elbow joint. This condition can make it challenging to perform everyday activities and may result from various factors, including injury, trauma, arthritis, or prolonged immobilization.

## What Are The Causes?

Several factors can contribute to the development of a stiff elbow, including:

- **Trauma or injury:** Fractures, dislocations, or soft tissue injuries around the elbow joint can lead to scar tissue formation and restricted movement.
- **Arthritis:** Degenerative changes in the elbow joint cartilage, such as osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis, can cause inflammation, pain, and stiffness.
- **Surgical complications:** Poor healing, excessive scar tissue formation, or nerve damage following previous elbow surgeries may result in elbow stiffness.
- **Prolonged immobilization:** Keeping the elbow joint immobilized for an extended period, such as after surgery or injury, can lead to joint contracture and stiffness.
- **Inflammatory conditions:** Conditions such as bursitis, tendonitis, or synovitis can cause inflammation and swelling in the elbow joint, contributing to stiffness.

## How To Prepare For Stiff Elbow Release?

To prepare for stiff elbow release surgery, you may be advised to:

- **Arrange for transportation:** Ensure you have transportation to and from the surgical facility on the day of the procedure.
- **Arrange for assistance:** Plan for assistance with activities of daily living, household tasks, and childcare during the recovery period.
- **Follow preoperative instructions:** Follow any specific instructions provided by your healthcare provider regarding fasting, medication management, and other preparatory measures before surgery.
- **Communicate with your healthcare team:** Inform your healthcare provider about any medications, supplements, or herbal remedies you are currently taking, as well as any allergies or medical conditions you may have.

## What Happens During Stiff Elbow Release Surgery?

During stiff elbow release surgery, the following steps typically occur:

- **Anesthesia:** You will be placed under general anesthesia or regional anesthesia to ensure you are comfortable and pain-free throughout the procedure.
- **Incision:** A surgical incision is made over the elbow joint, providing access to the structures

surrounding the joint.

- **Soft tissue release:** The contracted or scarred tissues around the elbow joint, including ligaments, tendons, or joint capsule, are carefully released or excised to improve range of motion.
- **Bone resection:** In some cases, bone resection or osteotomy may be performed to address bony abnormalities contributing to elbow stiffness.
- **Closure:** The incision is closed with sutures or staples, and a sterile dressing is applied to the surgical site.

## What Does The Recovery Process Include?

Recovery from stiff elbow release surgery involves several phases, including:

- **Immediate postoperative care:** You will be monitored in the recovery area until you are stable and alert, and your vital signs are within normal limits.
- **Pain management:** Pain medications, ice packs, or nerve blocks may be used to alleviate postoperative pain and discomfort.
- **Immobilization:** A splint, brace, or sling may be applied to support the elbow and protect the surgical site during the initial healing phase.
- **Rehabilitation:** Physical therapy or rehabilitation exercises are initiated to gradually restore elbow function, strength, and range of motion, following the guidance of a healthcare provider or physical therapist.
- **Home recovery:** You will be discharged home with instructions for wound care, activity restrictions, pain management, and follow-up appointments with your healthcare provider.

## What Are The Potential Risk Factors And Complications?

While stiff elbow release surgery is generally safe and effective, potential risks and complications may include:

- Infection at the surgical site.
- Bleeding or blood clots.
- Nerve or blood vessel injury.
- Persistent or recurrent stiffness.
- Loss of range of motion or functional limitations.
- Delayed healing or nonunion of the bone.
- Adverse reactions to anesthesia or surgical complications.