Shoulder Arthroscopy

MIDLANDS ARM AND SHOULDER CLINIC

Shoulder Anatomy

The shoulder joint is made up of a ball and socket joint, where the head of the humerus (upper arm bone) articulates with the socket of the scapula (shoulder blade), which is called the glenoid. The two articulating surfaces of the bones are covered with cartilage, which prevents friction between the moving bones, enabling smooth movement. Tendons and ligaments around the shoulder joint provide strength and stability to the joint.

Condition Overview

Injury and disease to the bones or soft tissues of the shoulder joint can make it unstable, and lead to pain, inflammation, and reduced mobility.

What is Shoulder Arthroscopy?

Arthroscopy is a minimally invasive diagnostic and surgical procedure performed for joint problems. Shoulder arthroscopy is performed using a pencil-sized instrument called an arthroscope. The arthroscope consists of a light system and camera that projects images of the surgical site onto a computer screen for your surgeon to clearly view. Arthroscopy is used to treat disease conditions and injuries involving the bones, cartilage, tendons, ligaments, and muscles of the shoulder joint.

Indications of Shoulder Arthroscopy

Shoulder arthroscopy is indicated to treat the following shoulder conditions when conservative treatment such as medication and therapy fails to relieve pain and disability:

- Shoulder impingement
- Rotator cuff tear
- Frozen shoulder or stiffness of the shoulder joint
- Shoulder instability
- Biceps rupture
- Damaged cartilage or ligaments
- Bone spurs or bony projections
- Arthritis of the collarbone

Shoulder Arthroscopy Procedure

Your surgeon performs shoulder arthroscopy under general or regional anaesthesia. You may be positioned lying down on your side with your arm propped up or sitting in a semi-seated position. Sterile fluid is injected into the shoulder joint to expand the surgical area, so your surgeon has a clear view of the damage and room to work. A button-sized hole is made in the shoulder and the arthroscope is inserted. Your surgeon can view images captured by the camera in the arthroscope on a large monitor. Surgical instruments are introduced into the joint through separate small holes to remove and repair the damage to the joint. After surgery, the instruments are removed, and the incisions are closed with stitches or small sterile bandage strips.

Postoperative Care for Shoulder Arthroscopy

After the surgery, the small surgical wounds take a few days to heal, and the surgical dressing is replaced by simple Band-Aids. The recovery time depends on the type and extent of the problem for which the procedure was performed. Pain medications are prescribed to keep you comfortable. The arm of the affected shoulder is placed in a sling for a short period. Physiotherapy is advised to improve shoulder mobility and strength after the surgery.

Advantages of Shoulder Arthroscopy

The advantages of arthroscopy compared to open surgery with a large incision include:

- Less pain
- Fewer complications
- Shorter hospital stays
- Faster recovery

Risks and complications of Shoulder Arthroscopy

Complications of shoulder arthroscopy include infection, bleeding, damage to nearby nerves or blood vessels, or delayed healing after the surgery. In certain cases, stiffness of the shoulder joint may occur after the surgery. It is important to participate actively in your physiotherapy to prevent this from occurring.