Ankle arthroscopy

Procedure
An ankle arthroscopy is a form of keyhole surgery, which involves using very small incisions to gain access into the ankle joint. Each incision is less than 1cm long and usually two incisions are required.

The inside of the ankle joint can then be inspected using a small camera, and necessary procedures can be carried out.

An arthroscopy is usually carried out under general anaesthetic and you will normally be able to go home the same day. Sometimes, for various reasons, you may be advised to stay in hospital overnight.

Following your operation

Pain relief
When you wake up after surgery the ankle should feel comfortable. You should try to ensure that you have a supply of over-the-counter painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, that you can take as required once home (within the recommended dose). If you’re unable to take these medications, please discuss appropriate alternatives with the nursing staff or your GP.

Ice can be useful, both for pain relief and to help decrease any swelling. This can be applied for 15-20 minutes every one to two hours as required, particularly for the first few days. This can take the form of wrapped up ice cubes, ice packs, or a bag of frozen peas, but make sure you protect the skin with a damp pillowcase or tea towel.

Mobility
After your operation, once you are back on the ward, the physiotherapist will teach you how to use crutches and ensure you are walking safely.

You will generally be able to put as much weight through the ankle as is comfortable. You will be informed if your instructions differ from this as may be the case with certain conditions, or if the arthroscopy is done alongside another procedure.

If you are fully weight bearing it is likely that you will be more comfortable using crutches for the first few days. These can then be discarded once you feel ready.

Elevating your leg when not moving will help to decrease any swelling, as will regular application of ice.

We encourage you to exercise your ankle within the bandage as soon as possible. Some gentle exercises are attached at the end of this sheet.

You will be given an outpatient physiotherapy appointment to check your progress, continue your exercises, and help you return to normal activities.
**Dressings**
Following an ankle arthroscopy you will have a crepe bandage around your ankle, under which is a layer of wool and smaller dressings over the wounds. Your dressing should be left in place until you are seen in clinic two weeks after your operation.

Your dressings need to remain dry throughout this time.

Occasionally your instructions may vary slightly from this depending on surgeon preference and the procedure carried out. The nursing staff on the ward will always tell you what needs to happen with your dressings.

**Driving**
Generally, you should be comfortable and safe to drive around one week after your ankle arthroscopy, as long as you've been given permission to put your full weight on your ankle. If the amount of weight you are allowed to put through your ankle is restricted, you will need to wait until you're fully weight bearing before attempting to drive.

Before returning to driving you must be able to safely perform an emergency stop.

**Sport**
It's best to leave any sporting activity for at least two weeks following your operation.

Realistically, you can begin to build up your activity from two weeks after your operation, but it will probably take at least four weeks before more vigorous sporting activity will be possible.

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**Any specific instructions (if appropriate)**

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**Contact details**
Orthopaedic physiotherapy team
Southampton General Hospital
Tremora Road
Southampton
SO16 6YD

Tel: 023 8079 4452

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8079 4688 for help.

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Ankle mobilising exercises
Try to complete the exercises at least three times a day.
Keep your foot elevated (up) to decrease swelling.
Apply ice, wrapped in a pillowcase or tea towel, to your foot and ankle for ten minutes every hour.

1. Lying on your back or sitting up in bed, point your toes away and towards you.
   Repeat 15 times.

2. Lying on your back or sitting up in bed, turn your feet inwards so your soles of your feet are facing each other, then turn your feet outwards.
   Repeat 15 times.

3. Lying on your back or sitting up in bed, keep your knee straight then pull your toes towards you.
   Apply a gentle pressure using a belt or towel and hold for 30 seconds.
   Repeat ten times.

4. Sitting with your feet on the floor, lift your heels up and down.
   Repeat fifteen times.

5. Sitting with your feet on the floor, slide your foot underneath the chair, keeping your heel on the floor.
   Repeat ten times.
6. Stand holding onto a supportive surface, and stretch one leg behind you, with your knee straight, and your foot flat on the floor.

   Lean your body forwards until you feel a stretch in your calf muscle.

   Hold for 30 seconds and repeat three times.

7. Stand holding onto a supportive surface. Stretch one leg behind you, with your knee bent and your foot flat on the floor.

   Gently bend both your knees until you feel a stretch in your lower calf muscle.

   Hold for 30 seconds and repeat three times.