

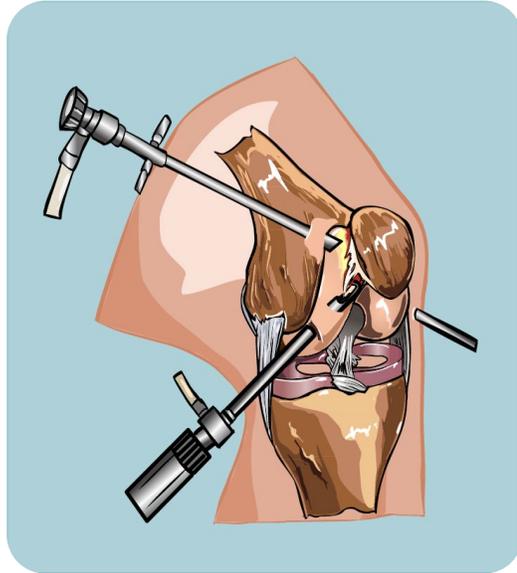
Arthroscopic Surgery

My child's doctor suggested arthroscopy.

What is it?

The word *arthroscopy* comes from the Greek words, *arthro* (joint) and *skopein* (to look). The term literally means “to look within the joint.”

Arthroscopy is a surgical procedure that uses a tiny camera to see the inside of a joint. Small cuts are made to put the camera and small surgical tools into the joint. It helps doctors diagnose and treat many orthopedic problems of the knee, shoulder, elbow, hip, and ankle.



Arthroscope view of tools inside knee

Why does my child need arthroscopy?

For diagnostic tests

To help find out what is causing your child's joint problem, your child's doctor may use many tests, such as x-rays, MRI, and CT scans. In some cases, your child's doctor may recommend arthroscopy to look inside the joint to be sure of a correct diagnosis.

For arthroscopic treatment

As surgical tools and techniques have improved, more joint problems are being treated with arthroscopy.

Arthroscopy is often used to treat a variety of problems, including:

- Torn or damaged cartilage, such as a labral tear in the knee
- Torn ligaments and tendons, such as an Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) tear in the knee
- Loose fragments of bone or cartilage
- Swollen (inflamed) joint lining. This lining is called the synovium

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To Learn More

- Orthopedics and Sports Medicine
206-987-2109
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

What happens during my child's surgery?

Most patients go home the same day (1 to 2 hours) after they have surgery. However, arthroscopy still requires an operating room and anesthesia (pain relief).

Anesthesia

Three types of anesthesia may be used for the procedure. In most cases, a combination of these methods will be chosen.

- **General anesthesia:** your child will be asleep and pain-free.
- **Regional anesthesia:** numbing medicine is injected around the nerves that control feeling in the area. This type of anesthesia blocks out pain so that your child will need less general anesthesia.
- **Local anesthesia:** a numbing medicine is injected into the joint and around the small incisions (cuts).

Your child's surgery

The length of your child's surgery depends on the diagnosis, what your doctor finds at the time of surgery, and what treatment is necessary.

- The doctor makes 2 to 3 small cuts in the skin about 5 mm in size (about the width of a pencil) for the camera.
- Salt water (saline) is pumped into the knee to help the doctor see the joint clearly.
- A narrow tube with a camera on the end is put through one of the cuts. The camera is attached to a video screen that lets the doctor see inside the joint.
- If treatment is needed, the doctor may put other small tools inside the joint through the other cuts.
- At the end of surgery, the doctor will close the cuts with stitches or strips of tape (Steri-Strips) and cover them with a dressing.

Your child's doctor will take pictures of the procedure from the video screen. You will be able to view these pictures after the surgery to see what was done.

How long will it take for my child to recover?

The doctor will recommend specific exercises and/or physical therapy to help speed your child's recovery. The doctor may also prescribe pain medicine. It is not unusual to resume daily activities, and go back to school within a week of the procedure. Full recovery will depend on what type of problem was treated.

Recovery from simple procedures is fast in most cases. Your child may need crutches or a sling for 1 to 2 weeks after some types of surgery.

Recovery will take longer if a more complex procedure was done, particularly if parts of the joint were repaired. Crutches or a sling may be needed for up to 6 weeks. Full recovery may take several months to a year.

Complications

Most children do not have complications from arthroscopy, however, there are some risks that are usually minor and treatable. Your doctor will discuss these with you.