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Arthroscopic release of calcific tendinitis

You've been listed for an operation called arthroscopic release of calcific tendinitis. You should have received most of the information during your last consultation with me. While the operation is successful for the vast majority of patients, there is a small risk of complications. As part of the consent process I will explain some common and/or significant complications to you. This list doesn't include every single complication that could possibly occur, but will focus on the important ones. While it is important that you understand the risk of complications, this shouldn't put you off having the operation, as the potential benefits of successful surgery by far outweigh the small risk of complications. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me if you've got any further questions about this.

Infection: There is always a small risk of infection following any surgery. The risk is small. If the wound should become red/hot/swollen/painful following the operation you should see myself, your GP or a Doctor in the A&E department for advice. A short course of Antibiotics will usually eradicate the infection. Deep infection affecting the inside of the joint is even rarer, but this could damage the joint permanently unless it is dealt with promptly with a surgical washout and antibiotics.

Nerve damage: As part of the procedure traction is applied to your arm to make the introduction of instruments into your shoulder joint easier. This can in rare instances result in a traction injury to nerves in the arm, potentially resulting in pain, numbness and weakness. Usually this is a problem that gets better with time. Permanent damage is very rare.

Pain and persistent symptoms: For a lot of patients pain will settle quickly following surgery, but for others pain may only settle slowly. In some patients this can take months. While the procedure is successful in most patients, there is no guarantee of success. Not every patient is completely pain free following surgery; some patients do have residual pain. Further investigations may be required. For some patients with residual pain further physiotherapy +/-steroid injection can be helpful. Only rarely is further surgery indicated. Some abnormalities in the shoulder may not be treatable by keyhole surgery (like general wear) and can be an ongoing source of pain. Sometimes I may find unexpected problems in the shoulder that may require further surgery at a later stage. The calcium deposit is usually buried inside the tendon and has to be scraped and washed out. Large deposits can sometimes leave a hole in the tendon that may have to be repaired. This will prolong your rehab process. Incomplete removal of calcium can be a source of ongoing pain, inflammation and irritability. This may settle with time or may require treatment with steroid injections or rarely further surgery.

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Stiffness: This can sometimes occur following surgery. For most patients this resolves within 6 months of the operation and with help of physiotherapy.

Swelling and bruising: This is normal after surgery and usually resolves quickly.

Bleeding: This is rarely a problem following keyhole surgery. You may end up with a small bruise, rarely a big one. Further surgery to stop a major bleed would be extremely unusual.

Following Surgery: Your arm will be in a sling. This can be removed as soon as the pain starts subsiding. You should be able to go home on the same day.

Physiotherapy: This is all important to help making the operation a success. The Physios on the ward will give you instructions regarding simple exercises, hygiene etc. They will look after you during your Rehab and will gradually give you more exercises.

Sutures and dressings: The sutures are absorbable. There is no need to remove them. The dressing can be removed after 2 weeks and provided everything has healed well you can then have a shower or a bath without the need to cover the wound.

Pain killers: You will get some to take home from the ward. They work best when you take them early before it's really painful. Take some painkillers before you go to bed. If pain levels are high: Take painkillers regularly to keep the blood levels high. If pain levels are low: Take painkillers as and when required.

Driving: This is a bit of a legal grey area. As a rule of thumb, you need to be seen as being safe to drive in order to be safe to drive. In other words: You must be able to safely execute an emergency manoeuvre without problems.

Problems following surgery: Phone the ward for advice.

If you would prefer to discuss this again with me prior to treatment then please contact my secretary: Tel 07935 480188, email jfortho.secretary@gmail.com

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