

Ankle Arthroscopy

What is the problem?

Arthroscopy (or keyhole surgery) is a procedure used to view the inside of a joint. It is a very useful way to treat cartilage damage, scar tissue, bone spurs and ankle impingement.

What is involved in the surgery?

There are a number of steps involved in ankle arthroscopic surgery. These include:

- General anaesthetic and antibiotics.
- Two small incisions (approximately 1 cm each) over the front of the ankle.
- Insertion of an arthroscope.
- Insertion of arthroscopic instruments, including scissors, scrapers, a shaver and a burr.
- Infiltration with local anaesthetic.
- Wound closure with stitches (sutures).

What are the possible risks?

All surgical procedures carry some risk. The risk of complications with ankle arthroscopic surgery is low. Potential risks include:

- Infection.
- Nerve injury, which may result in numbness, tingling and/or pins and needles on the top of the foot.
- Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or pulmonary embolism (PE). The risk of DVT increases with smoking, the oral contraceptive pill, hormone replacement therapy, immobility and obesity.
- Anaesthetic complications.
- Drug allergy.
- Post-operative synovitis (inflammation of the lining of the joint), which usually settles with anti-inflammatory medication.
- Stiffness.
- Ongoing pain.

What can I expect after surgery?

Rest and elevation

- You will have a boot on your leg. Keep your foot elevated as much as possible, particularly during the first 72 hours.
- Keep your dressings dry and intact until your post-operative appointment.
- Mobilise short distances as pain allows. Aim to remain at home for the first few weeks, limiting long periods of standing or walking.
- Bear weight as tolerated unless instructed otherwise by Dr Phegan.

Pain relief

Pain relief may be required for up to two weeks. Depending on your other medications, this may include:

- Regular paracetamol.
- Anti-inflammatory medication.
- Breakthrough opioid medication if required.

Driving

Your ability to drive safely will depend on which foot has been operated on, your mobility, footwear and your ability to safely control the vehicle.

- Right foot or both feet: you should not drive for a minimum of 6 weeks.
- Left foot: if you drive an automatic vehicle, driving may be possible, but Dr Phegan recommends waiting a minimum of 2 weeks before attempting to drive.
- Driving while wearing a cast or boot may be hazardous.

You should be able to safely control the vehicle and perform an emergency stop before returning to driving. Check with your insurer if required.

Follow up

Keep your dressings dry and intact for the first 2 weeks.

Your first postoperative appointment will be arranged by Dr Phegan. A confirmation SMS will be sent with the date and time.

At approximately 10–14 days, you will usually have:

- Wound review
- Removal of stitches/sutures - Occasionally, sutures may need to remain in place for longer.
- Assessment of your recovery

Typical recovery milestones

Time after surgery	Expected milestones
2 weeks	Wound review and removal of stitches Commence rehabilitation with in-house physiotherapist.
2-6 weeks	Regular physiotherapy to improve range of motion, strength and proprioception.
6 weeks–3 months	Reduction of swelling, scar massage and mobility work
3–6 months	Full recovery is expected for most patients

These timeframes are a guide only. Every patient's recovery is individual and depends on the severity of the injury and the complexity of the surgery.

When should I seek help?

If you have concerns about your recovery, please contact your treating team.

During office hours

Dr Phegan's office
Phone: **(07) 5671 1120**
Email: info@drphegan.com

After hours

Please contact the hospital where your surgery was performed or attend your local GP or emergency department.

If you experience a medical emergency, seek urgent medical attention or call 000.

Important information

This information sheet provides general information about ankle arthroscopy. Your individual treatment and recovery may differ.

Please follow the specific instructions provided by Dr Phegan and your treating medical team, particularly regarding weight-bearing, medications, wound care, follow-up and driving.

If you are unsure about any aspect of your recovery, please contact the practice for advice.