

Arthroscopy

The basics

Arthroscopy is the key hole procedure where a small camera is inserted in the joint. This procedure can be applied for a varieties of joints but is most commonly used in elbow, shoulder and stifle joints. Hips, hocks and wrists can also benefit from this procedure, however it is not so common.

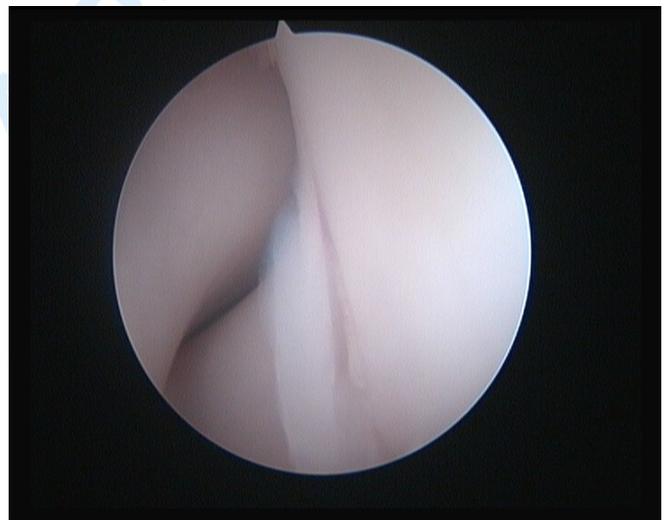
The main advantage of this procedure is the minimal amount of trauma it produces, hence the name minimally invasive procedure. It also magnifies the lesions and makes the surgeon able to spot smaller problems that can turn into big problems if left untreated. Arthroscopy provides a diagnostic and a prognostic. In most of the situations, surgical treatment is also performed arthroscopically.

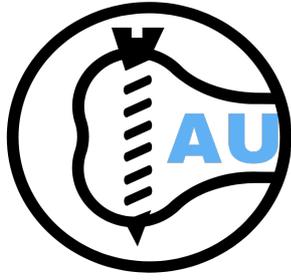
In the case of our cat friends, due to the physical size of the instruments and the small size of joints, very rarely arthroscopy is feasible. This does not mean it is impossible and we would try our best to cater for them.

The procedure

Usually two or three stab incisions will be made to get access to the joint. One incision is for a thin metal tube (approximately 3mm wide) attached to a camera which is inserted in the joint space. Another incision is used for surgical instruments. The whole procedure requires fine movements and precise hand eye coordination.

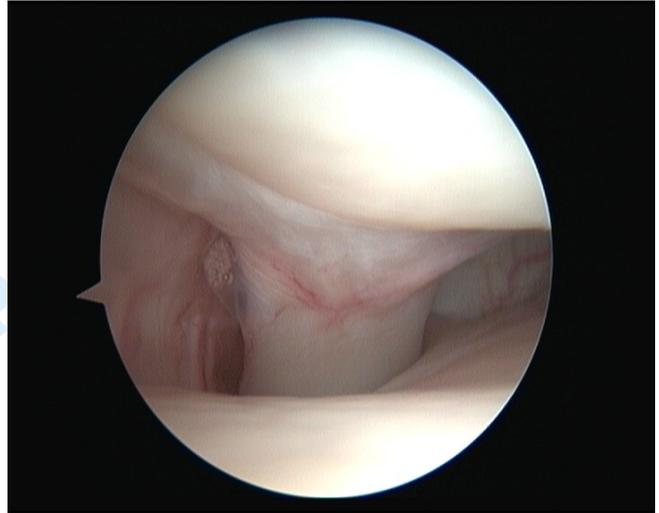
- Elbow
 - the most common condition of the elbow is called elbow dysplasia
 - pathology of the canine elbow is common and perhaps one of the most common reasons for chronic fore leg lameness in young dogs. In the vast majority of cases, the inner (medial) part of the elbow is affected
 - arthroscopy is performed to assess the degree of elbow cartilage disease, to make a plan and to remove any diseased bone that should not be there
 - arthroscopy would also allow to provide a prognosis





- **Shoulder**

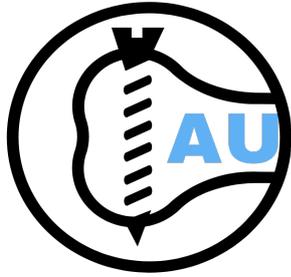
- in young dogs, arthroscopy of the shoulder joint is performed to assess the structure of the cartilage; sometime, the cartilage of the shoulder joint is diseased and it detaches from the underlying bone; this condition is called osteochondrosis (OCD)
- in adult dogs or in working dogs (including agility dogs) the shoulder joint can suffer from ligament tears, cartilage tears or chronic sprains. Although arthroscopy cannot always 'fix' the problem, it would provide a diagnostic and will allow us to make a plan of action.
- in some cases, the shoulder and the elbow are painful together – this is empathically called 'shelbow' pain. Shelbow pain means that investigations, including arthroscopy, will be needed on both the shoulder and the elbow.



- **Stifle**

- the stifle joint is a 'tight' joint which makes arthroscopy slightly more difficult than with the other joints.
- arthroscopy is performed when a clear diagnosis cannot be made by traditional methods such as clinical examination and radiography.
- Most of the time, arthroscopy of the stifle is used for management of partial cranial cruciate ligament disease





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The aftercare

***these instructions are only valid for patients that have had ONLY arthroscopic procedures. If arthroscopy was combined with a different procedure, especially one involving metallic or non-metallic implants, please check the 'General Orthopaedic' and 'Postoperative recovery' sheets.

Sutures are usually resorbable, under the skin and there is no need to be removed.

Check ups with your vet/nurse are recommended at day 3 and day 10 postoperative.

Limping is to be expected, most of the times worse than before the surgery. This is due to surgical trauma.

Swelling is not normal and should be assessed by a vet.

The incision should be clean and dry. If the wound opens up or if there is discharge, please see your vet.

Medication – pain killers are prescribed for various lengths of time, on a case by case basis.

Antibiotics – we are all aware of antibiotic resistance and the damage that misuse of antibiotics has done to our lives. We usually don't prescribe antibiotics unless absolutely necessary.

Physiotherapy – please see our dedicated section on the website.

As a rule, steady improvement should be noted. If your dog was improving but it turned for the worse, please see a vet as soon as possible. Should that happen, please restrict the exercise to lead walks only for 10 minutes at a time and book an check up with your vet ASAP.

Most dogs return to full function eight weeks after an arthroscopic procedure, providing no bone has been cut or no implants have been used.

