



Southern Counties

VETERINARY  
SPECIALISTS

# Arthroscopy

Information Sheet

**Southern Counties Veterinary Specialists  
Specialist Referral Service**

## What is arthroscopy?

Arthroscopy is a surgical technique used to visualize, diagnose and treat problems inside joints, and the word itself means “to look within the joint.”

## How does it work?

This is considered a ‘key hole’ procedure so, in an arthroscopic surgery, a small incision is made in the patient’s skin and a pencil-sized instrument that contains a small lens and lighting system to magnify and illuminate the structures is inserted into the joint. Light is transmitted through fiber optics to the end of the arthroscope and a miniature television camera connected to a monitor, enabling the surgeon to see the interior of the joint, especially the cartilage and ligaments, which cannot be seen with other methods such as radiographs or CT scans. The surgeon can determine the extent and type of injury, and then repair or correct the problem, if needed.

## Does my pet need arthroscopy?

Arthroscopic examination of joints in dogs can be done in all major canine joints. In most cases



arthroscopy is used as a diagnostic tool, in cases where the diagnosis cannot be reached only by physical exam and other imaging modalities such as radiographs etc, as well as a treatment modality, so the condition may be corrected without opening the whole joint. The most common uses in canine patients conditions of the elbow, knee and shoulder, such as elbow dysplasia, shoulder osteochondrosis and cranial cruciate ligament/meniscal tears in the stifle (knee) joint. Your surgeon will determine if arthroscopy is needed for your pet.

## What is the typical aftercare for the procedure?

Arthroscopy is minimally invasive (key hole) and therefore, the surgical trauma is minimized compared to other techniques. Usually, our patients will be able to go home the day after the procedure, using the operated limb with reasonable comfort and taking mild pain medication, so they continue to rest and perform rehabilitation exercises, as instructed by us, at home.

## What are the real benefits of arthroscopy?

By avoiding open surgery, post-operative discomfort is minimized, recovery is significantly quicker and hospitalization time is shorter. While arthroscopy is not inexpensive, quicker recovery, shorter hospitalization time and avoidance of redundant diagnostic imaging techniques may actually reduce overall cost. Not all surgical procedures can be done arthroscopically and not all problems can be solved via key hole surgery, but arthroscopy provides a real-time view of the inside of the joint that no other technique provides.



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