

# Ankle Arthroscopy



Removing  
Loose Bodies  
and Spurs

# What Is Arthroscopy?

Your joints help you move freely. But living with a worn or injured joint can make an active lifestyle painful. Your orthopaedic surgeon has suggested **arthroscopy** to look inside your ankle joint and repair problems. Read on to learn more about preparing for surgery and the recovery time that will follow. After ankle arthroscopy, you may be able to return to many of the activities you once enjoyed.

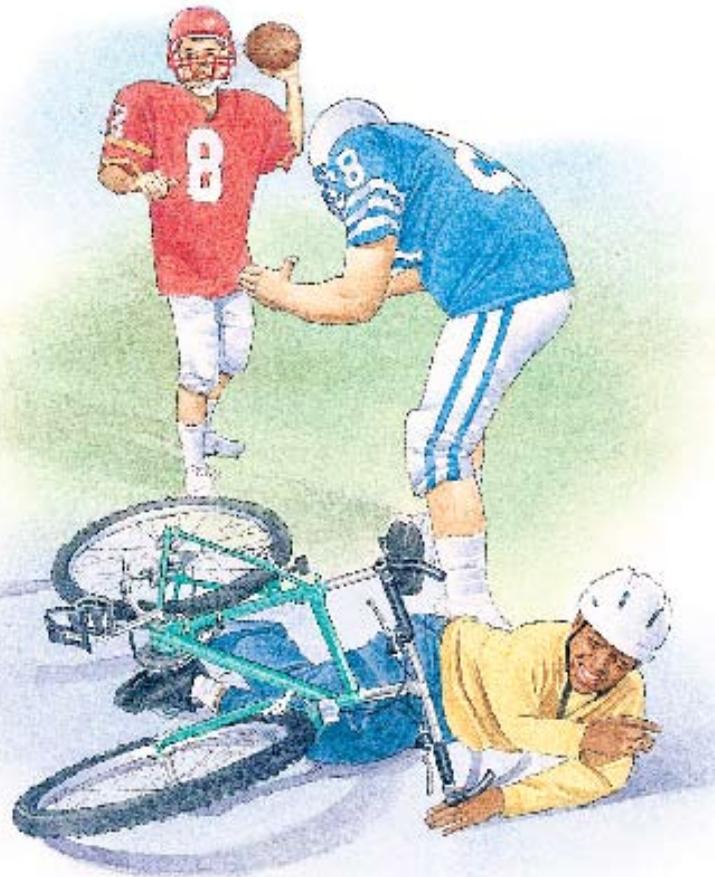
## Arthroscopy and Your Injury

Arthroscopy can be used to diagnose or treat your ankle problem. A problem may be **chronic** (ongoing) or **acute** (sudden). Constant use of the ankle over time can lead to chronic problems. An acute injury can result from a sudden fall, blow, or twisting motion.

## Why Arthroscopy?

Arthroscopy is often a good way to do joint surgery. Why? Because:

- The surgeon can often find and treat the problem during one procedure.
- The surgeon can often see the joint better than with open surgery.
- Smaller incisions are used than with open surgery. As a result, you may recover faster and have less scarring.



## How Arthroscopy Works

To look inside your ankle, your surgeon will use an **arthroscope**. This is a slender instrument that contains a lens and a light source. The arthroscope and other special tools are inserted into the ankle through **portals** (tiny incisions). Using a camera, the arthroscope sends an image of your ankle to a **monitor** (TV screen). This lets your surgeon see your joint more clearly.



During arthroscopy, sterile fluid flows through one of the portals. This expands the joint, giving your surgeon room to work.



You probably can return to most of your normal activities after recovering from arthroscopy.

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# Your Evaluation

Your plans for arthroscopy will begin with a visit to your surgeon. At this time, you may need to answer questions about your ankle problem. Your surgeon will check your ankle and may order special tests. This process will help your surgeon learn more about your ankle problem and plan treatment.

## Health History

You may need to provide details about your family's health history. Also, be sure to mention all the medications you take. You are likely to be asked:

- When and how your injury occurred
- Which activities affect your pain
- What treatments you have tried so far

## Checking Your Joint

Your ankle will be checked for signs of injury. These signs include swelling, tenderness, decreased range of motion, clicking or catching, and weakness.



Your surgeon will check your joint for signs of injury.

## Diagnostic Imaging Tests

Imaging tests may be done to assess your ankle. Such tests include:

- **X-ray**, which can reveal abnormal bone structures, such as bone spurs.
- **MRI** (magnetic resonance imaging), which can show damage to soft tissues.
- **CT** (computed tomography), which uses a computer and x-rays to show changes in soft tissues and bones.



MRI can reveal soft-tissue injuries.

# Before Your Arthroscopy

The medical staff will help you prepare for arthroscopy. They may ask for the results of any recent checkup or special tests. You will be told how to prepare at home for surgery. Someone will also talk with you about the type of anesthesia to be used. Finally, you will learn whether you should plan to spend the night at the hospital.

## Getting Ready at Home

At home before surgery:

- Don't eat or drink after the midnight before surgery. This includes coffee.
- Ask in advance if you can take any daily medication the day of surgery.
- Stop taking anti-inflammatory medicine, such as aspirin, 7 to 10 days before surgery.
- If you smoke, now is the time to stop.
- Arrange for a ride home after surgery.



## Planning for Anesthesia

Before surgery, you will be told about the type of anesthesia that will keep you free of pain during arthroscopy. **General anesthesia** lets you sleep through surgery. **Regional** and **local anesthesia** numb only part of your body. They may be given with drugs that will help you relax.



## Risks of Arthroscopy

As with any surgery, arthroscopy involves some risks. These are rare, but include:

- Excess bleeding
- Blood clots
- Infection
- Instrument failure in surgery
- Damage to nerves and blood vessels
- A shift to open surgery that would require a larger incision

# Arthroscopy of the Ankle

Arthroscopy is used to find and treat many types of ankle problems. These include loose bodies and bone spurs.

## The Healthy Ankle

The ankle is a strong, mobile joint. It takes its shape from the lower leg bones (**fibula** and **tibia**) and one of the foot bones (**talus**). These bones support the body's weight. They also keep the joint stable. **Cartilage** covers the ends of the bones and aids in movement.

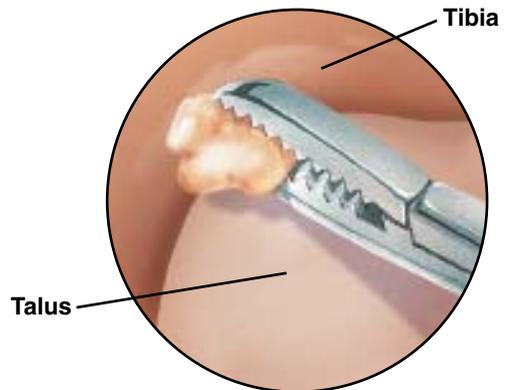
## Right Ankle



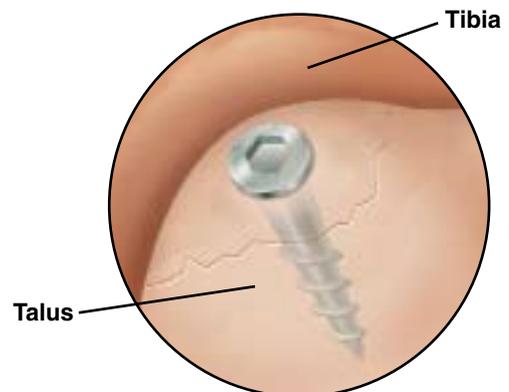
## Common Ankle Problems

### Loose Bodies

Loose bodies are bone or cartilage fragments that have chipped off inside the joint. In some cases, loss of blood supply to a piece of bone (due to injury) can cause it to loosen. If left in place, loose bodies can damage the joint surface and restrict ankle movement. They can also cause pain and swelling. Your surgeon can remove loose bodies from the joint or secure a loose piece of bone in place. This will help restore normal, smooth ankle motion.



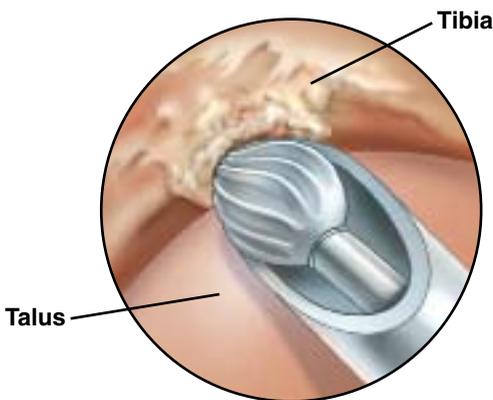
A loose body is removed.



A piece of bone is secured in place.

## Bone Spurs

When the bones in a joint pinch each other, they are **impinged**. This problem is often caused by **bone spurs** (growths) that have formed on the joint. Pressure from the spur may cause pain when you move your ankle. Your surgeon will remove the spur and smooth the bone surface.



After a bone spur is removed, the surface of the bone is smoothed.

## After Arthroscopy

At home, follow your surgeon's guidelines for healing:

- Elevate and ice your ankle.
- Use a bandage to compress your ankle.
- When you shower, cover your ankle with plastic to keep it dry.
- Take pain medication as directed.

## The Road to Recovery

After surgery, your joint may be swollen, painful, and stiff. Recovery times can vary. Your surgeon will tell you when to resume activity. If you had a loose body, bone spur, or OCD removed, you may be able to bear weight when the pain is gone. With a secured OCD, you may need to wear a surgical boot or cast and use crutches for some time.



You may be told to write the alphabet with your foot daily to keep your ankle flexible.

# Your Surgical Checklist

The list below outlines what to do before and after arthroscopy. If you have questions, be sure to get them answered before the procedure.

## Before Surgery

- See your surgeon. Have any tests that your surgeon orders.
- Stop taking aspirin and other medications as advised by your surgeon before surgery.
- If you smoke, now is a good time to stop. This will reduce the risk of surgical complications.
- Do not eat or drink anything as instructed before surgery.
- Arrange for someone to drive you home from surgery.

## After Surgery

- Schedule your first follow-up visit as instructed after surgery.
- Take care of your incisions as directed.
- Complete your physical therapy program if one is prescribed.
- Ask your surgeon which activities you can do right away and what you should avoid.

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