



THUNDER BASIN ORTHOPAEDICS  
— AND SPORTS MEDICINE —

# Shoulder Arthroscopy

## What is shoulder arthroscopy?

Shoulder arthroscopy is a type of minimally invasive surgery where the surgeon uses a camera to look into the shoulder joint and appropriately address shoulder pathology through small incisions (about 2 cm). This is typically an outpatient procedure. The benefits of shoulder arthroscopy are smaller incisions, less scarring/damage to surrounding structures, and quicker recovery time.

## Common indications for shoulder arthroscopy:

There are many indications and common procedures that involve shoulder arthroscopy. Some common procedures are listed below:

- **Rotator cuff tears:** The rotator cuff is made up of 4 tendons that help stabilize and move the shoulder joint. Pain is a common symptom of a rotator cuff tear, but often times patients also experience decreased range of motion and weakness. Some rotator cuff tears require repair depending on the size and location of the tear. *See rotator cuff handout for more information.*
- **Labral Tears:** The labrum is the tissue rim surrounding the cup of the shoulder joint and serves as a bumper to hold the ball in the socket. Patients usually experience shoulder instability when they have a torn labrum. *See bankart repair handout for more information.*
- **Impingement:** Impingement is when the top part of the rotator cuff is pinched between the ball of the shoulder joint (humeral head) and the roof of the shoulder (acromion) resulting in an irritated and swollen tendon. This typically causes pain and decreased range of motion. If conservative treatments do not improve this condition, surgical options may be performed.
- **Biceps tendinitis:** One of the two upper portions of the biceps tendon attaches to the top part of the cup in the shoulder joint. The biceps tendon may become inflamed, swollen, and torn resulting in pain from an injury or overuse. It may also cause tearing of the top lip of

the cup at its attachment in the joint. Surgical repair involving relocating the tendon's attachment may be indicated.

- Acromioclavicular osteoarthritis: The AC joint is a small joint in the roof of the shoulder. It is very common to have AC joint arthritis, but it does not always cause symptoms in patients. If symptoms occur, typically patients experience pain from this condition.

## **Pre-Operative Care:**

- Medical clearance: this will be determined by your surgeon depending on your age and medical history. You may need routine blood work, test, and/or an evaluation by your primary care provider depending on your age and medical history.
- Medications: stop taking all anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDS) and OTC herbal supplements/vitamins 2 weeks prior to your surgery. These medications thin your blood and make it difficult for your surgeon to perform the surgery. All other medications will be reviewed by the surgical facility.

## **Post-Operative Care:**

- Pain medication: you will typically be given a prescription anti-inflammatory medication for your baseline pain medication. You may also be given a stronger pain medication to take for breakthrough pain that the anti-inflammatory pain medication does not control.
  - Our goal at Thunder Basin Orthopaedics is to make you comfortable, but we do not expect you to be pain free.
- Dressing: leave bandage on for 72 hours after surgery, then may remove bandage and shower as normal. No soaking of the incision for 3 weeks after surgery. Leave steri-strips in place until they come off on their own.
- Ice: you may be given a cryocuff ice machine after surgery. Icing is very important to decrease swelling and pain after surgery. Leave ice on for 20 minutes at a time, and ice several times a day for the first week after surgery.
- Activity: You will be placed in a sling after your surgery for your comfort level. Wear the sling the first 1-2 weeks after surgery, but you may come out of the sling to perform gentle range of motion as tolerated.
- Physical therapy: you will typically begin physical therapy within a couple of days after surgery and go to physical therapy 2-3 times/week. Your rehab process will may take 3 months before your surgeon will clear you to return to full activity.

**Please refer to our attached frequently asked questions list. If your question has not been answered, please call Thunder Basin Orthopaedics at (307) 682-6222 – Gillette or (307) 358-6200 – Douglas.**

**Please call us at the above number if you experience severe pain that is not relieved by your medicine or if you experience a temperature over 101 degrees F, redness/swelling in your thigh or calf.**

