

What practical issues should I consider?

The table shows key practical issues for those who have arthroscopic surgery and those who do not.

	ARTHROSCOPIC SURGERY	NO SURGERY
Procedure and follow-up	Performed by a surgeon in an operating theatre. Requires an anesthetic. Individualised follow-up with wound care and exercise	Advice from a professional about other treatments may be useful (eg. injections, exercise, activity modification, medication)
Recuperation	You may use a sling a few days after surgery. Recuperation typically takes between 2-6 weeks	No recuperation needed
Activity restrictions	Avoid heavy lifting for 7-21 days, overhead activities for 6 weeks and pushing through your hands for 3 months	No activity restrictions
Time off work	Depends on recovery and demands of job. Usually a few weeks after surgery	No time off work
Driving	You can start driving as soon as you feel able to steer. This is normally after one week	No driving limitations
Costs	Out-of-pocket costs for surgery are generally high. There may also be out-of-pocket costs for physiotherapy after surgery	No surgical costs BUT there may be out-of-pocket costs for physiotherapy or injections



+ Summary of benefits, harms, and other practical issues

NON-SURGICAL OPTIONS

✓ Potential benefits

- May **improve by itself** (within 6 months half of people will recover) or with non-surgical options (ie. injections, exercise, or medication)
- **Avoid surgery**

– Potential harms

- May decide to **have surgery later**
- **Cost of non-surgical options** (eg. injection, physiotherapy)
- **Time to attend health appointments** (eg. for physiotherapy)
- Regardless of what treatment you have, your symptoms **may not improve**

SURGERY FOLLOWED BY 3-12 MONTHS REHABILITATION

✓ Potential benefits

- May provide **slight improvement in pain and function** compared to non-surgical options

– Potential harms

- Possible **surgical harms** (eg. frozen shoulder, infection)
- Your symptoms **may not improve** with surgery
- **Symptoms will temporarily be worse after surgery** due to the operation (eg. pain when sleeping or moving your arm)
- **Rehabilitation for 3-12 months** after surgery and time to attend rehabilitation
- May take up to **6 weeks** after subacromial decompression and **12 weeks** after rotator cuff repair to perform daily activities (eg. reach above your head, lift heavy objects)
- May take **3-4 months** after subacromial decompression and **6-12 months** after rotator cuff repair to return to heavy manual work, exercise, or sport
- **Out-of-pocket costs** are generally higher for surgery than non-surgical options. There may be **costs for rehabilitation** after surgery and due to **time needed off work**