

Day Procedure Unit

Removal of Metalwork Surgery

This leaflet gives information for patients and their families who are having an operation to remove metalwork from their Hand or Arm. It is intended to be used as a guideline only. Please check with your surgeon for more specific information.

Pre-operative preparation

You will be asked to attend the pre-admission assessment clinic 1-6 weeks prior to admission to ensure you are fit for surgery. You will be seen in the pre-admission clinic by the nurse for any necessary pre-operative tests, which may include; blood tests, cardiogram (ECG). If you are unlikely to require any pre-operative tests your assessment may be carried out by telephone.

You will be admitted on the day of surgery unless there are any medical reasons which may require you to be admitted the day before the operation.

The Operation

The operation is usually performed under a general anaesthetic. It may also be performed under a regional anaesthetic – where only your affected limb is anaesthetised by an injection of local anaesthetic either into your armpit or neck. Please remove all rings and jewellery from the hand/arm you are having the operation on. Although most patients will go home on the day of the procedure, occasionally some patients may require an overnight stay. All patients are required to bring an overnight bag.

After the Operation

You may feel some pain/discomfort after the operation. It is advised to take simple painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen which should be suitable to relieve this discomfort. Please bring these tablets with you on the day of the operation. Your hand/arm will be dressed with a bandage and maybe a plaster cast. It is important to keep your dressing dry until it is removed and the sutures removed.

Keep your affected hand/arm elevated in the sling or on a pillow for 24-48 hours. Avoid lifting any heavy objects. Gentle hand, finger and shoulder exercises will help prevent stiffness and swelling.

Most people are able to return to driving after one week however you should discuss this with your surgeon. Please also check with your insurance company, as policies can vary.

Most people are able to return to work 1-2 weeks after the operation but it does depend on the type of work that you do. You should discuss with your surgeon when you are able to return to work. You must discuss with your surgeon when you are able to return to sporting activities if relevant.

Follow – up

You will be informed when to have your sutures removed at your local GP surgery. Normally this is around 2 weeks after the operation. Your dressing needs to stay in place until this time. You will normally be seen in the outpatient clinic at 6 weeks.

What are the risk and complications?

The possible risks and complications for Removal of Metalwork surgery may include;

- Wound Infection – Antibiotics are usually given in the theatre to prevent against infection. If you experience any increase in pain, redness, swelling, or develop a temperature – please see your GP as this maybe a sign of infection.
- If you notice the fingers on your affected hand become a pale or blue colour, become cold to touch or if you lose any sensation or experience any tingling please contact the telephone numbers given to you in your discharge letter.
- Scar – Your scar will be firm to touch and tender for up to 8 weeks. This can be helped by massaging the area with an unscented moisturiser e.g., E45.
- Swelling – May persist for up to three months. Keeping your operated arm elevated will help to relieve this.
- Stiffness – This may occur if the hand is not exercised and a few people may need to have some physiotherapy after the operation.
- Failure to remove the metalwork- although rare it is possible that not all the metalwork is removed if it is felt by the operating surgeon that too much damage will be done to the bone/overall function and pain will not be improved.
- Temporary bone weakness – it is possible to fracture the bone through a weak point e.g. a screw hole and it is recommended that all contact/extreme sports are avoided for 6 weeks post-surgery.

Useful contacts for further information

If you have any queries prior to the procedure, please contact the Day Procedure Unit on **01603 286008**.

For help giving up Smoking: contact Smokefree Norfolk local freephone 0800 0854 113 or www.smokefreenorfolk@nhs.uk or email smokefreenorfolk@nchc.nhs.uk

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