ARTROSCOPIC CAPSULAR RELEASE

WHAT IS AN ARTROSCOPIC CAPSULAR RELEASE?
The reason you are going to have a capsular release is because you have a stiff shoulder and the aim of the operation is to improve the movement in your shoulder.

A stiff shoulder may sometimes be called a 'frozen shoulder', or you may have developed stiffness following an injury or a previous operation.

As you are aware, having a frozen shoulder can be a very painful condition that limits the amount you can move your arm.

You may have already tried a course of physiotherapy and/or had an injection in your shoulder to help pain relief. You probably find it difficult lifting your arm up, turning it outwards and putting it behind your back.

Surgery involves cutting through the tight capsule and therefore 'releasing' it. This should give you more movement and less pain.

After the operation, it may take up to six weeks for the post-operative soreness of your shoulder to settle down. It is vital that you get your shoulder moving with the help of a physiotherapist after the operation - otherwise it will stiffen up again.

HOW IS THE OPERATION CARRIED OUT?
The operation is carried out under a general anaesthetic, usually as a day case. This means you will go home on the day of your operation. Some patients who have other medical conditions may require an overnight stay in hospital.

The procedure is carried out as keyhole (arthroscopic) surgery. An arthroscopy is an operation using a specially designed small telescope linked to a TV camera which allows your surgeon to look inside your shoulder joint.

There will be two or three small scars on the back, side and front of your shoulder. This allows the surgeon to examine the shoulder joint and then use very small instruments to release the capsule where it has tightened up the most.

You will probably have some discomfort, bruising and swelling to your arm after your surgery, which is normal. The anaesthetist may put an injection into the side of your neck to numb your shoulder. This may last for up to 24 hours.

You will be given painkillers after the surgery to take home with you, as good pain relief is essential after this operation.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF AN ARTROSCOPIC CAPSULAR RELEASE?
Increased shoulder movement and hopefully decreased pain.

ARE THERE COMPLICATIONS OF HAVING AN ARTROSCOPIC CAPSULAR RELEASE?
As with most types of surgery, there are risks and complications which can occur unrelated to the capsular release.
These include:
• Anaesthetic risks
• Chest infections
• Blood clots in the legs (deep vein thrombosis)
• Blood clots in the lungs (pulmonary embolism)

Rare complications that can occur specifically with a capsular release are:
• Re-stiffening can occur but your physiotherapist will advise you of appropriate exercises to minimise this risk.
• Infection can be a serious complication but the risk is very small.
• Damage to the nerves as many of the large nerves and blood vessels that enter the arm pass closely to the site of the operation, but it is very rare that any permanent damage can occur.

These risks are very small but if any occur, further treatment or an operation may be necessary.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN HOSPITAL FOR?
This operation is generally carried out as a day case procedure unless you have any other medical conditions which may require you to stay overnight.

If you are having your operation as day surgery, you will need to have someone to collect you from the hospital and stay with you overnight to check that you are okay.

AFTER YOUR ARTHROSCOPIC CAPSULAR RELEASE

WILL I HAVE ANY STITCHES?
An arthroscopic wound does not usually need stitches. There will be a small dressing/plaster over the wounds whilst they heal. Your shoulder may initially appear swollen and during this time your wounds may leak a blood-stained watery fluid, but this usually settles after 24 - 48 hours. You may find that your shoulder and the surrounding area bruises, which again is normal. Keep all wounds dry until completely healed.

WILL I HAVE TO WEAR A SLING?
You may have your arm supported in a sling for 24 hours after your operation. This is for comfort only and is not there to stop you moving your arm. You need to move your arm as soon as possible ensuring adequate pain relief.

HOW WILL I SLEEP?
Sleeping can be uncomfortable if you try to lie on your operated side. We recommend you lie on your back or the opposite side. Pillows can be used to provide support and comfort.

WHEN CAN I DRIVE AGAIN?
Driving is a potential hazardous activity. People will differ as to how soon they are able to perform this task safely. We would advise you not to drive until you have enough movement and stretch in your arm to control the car safely.
WHAT EXERCISES WILL I NEED TO DO AFTER MY OPERATION?
The first six weeks following surgery are very important. Most of your recovery of movement happens during this time. You will be given exercises by a physiotherapist to begin stretching your shoulder immediately whilst you are still in hospital. Your exercises are important if you are going to get the most out of your shoulder after the operation. It is quite normal to experience aching, discomfort or stretching during and after your exercises but please be guided by your level of discomfort - you can do too much!

WILL I HAVE TO COME FOR PHYSIOTHERAPY?
As already mentioned, you should be starting to stretch your shoulder immediately after the operation. You will also have frequent appointments to see a physiotherapist to help progress your exercises and monitor your progress. Initially, you will be attending for physiotherapy as often as two or three times a week to make sure your shoulder gets moving. As your movement progresses, you will be seen once a week.

WHEN CAN I RESUME MY NORMAL ACTIVITIES?
This depends upon your symptoms. Most people are comfortable by six weeks after surgery. Most people feel able to return to light work (that does involve heavy lifting) around two to four weeks following a capsular release. You may feel that if your work involves heavy/overhead work that you should return after four to six weeks.