

SCAR TISSUE AND JOINT PAIN



Arthrofibrosis is a complication of injury or trauma where scar tissue formed within the joint and surrounding the soft tissue spaces leads to painful restriction of joint motion, often despite rehabilitation exercises and stretches.

Excessive scar tissue can be a serious medical condition that causes extreme pain, immobility, and arthritis in the joints, as well as limping, heat, swelling, popping, grating or weakness.

Scarring adhesions can occur in most major joints, including knees, shoulders, hips, ankles, and wrists. But arthrofibrosis of the knee is the most common occurrence.

SYMPTOMS

- ✦ Stiffness
- ✦ Inability to flex the knee
- ✦ Inability to straighten the knee
- ✦ Difficulty in sitting in a car or in a chair

The diagnosis of arthrofibrosis of the knee requires a full history and physical exam. It's important to determine the onset of the stiffness, associated injuries or conditions, and any previous treatments to address the issue. Evidence of osteoarthritis can also include joint space narrowing and/or bone spurs.

TREATMENT

Treatment options for knee arthrofibrosis vary from braces and corticosteroid injections to physical therapy and surgery. Other less commonly prescribed approaches include basic observation alone, or dynamic splinting (particularly in post-surgery patients).

Surgical treatment for arthrofibrosis depends upon the specific pathology, but will almost never be successful without diligent follow-up rehabilitation, in the form of extension dynamic splints or a very closely monitored physical therapy regimen.

Arthrofibrosis surgery can be very complex. Patients must undergo thorough advance assessment to consider all the different possible causes of the joint stiffness. Your primary care doctor should be your first stop on the path to determining the source of knee pain.

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