

OS27lite Removing Metalware

Expires end of December 2019

A more detailed version of this procedure specific information sheet is available. Please ask your health practitioner at Joondalup Health Campus for a copy.

Write questions or notes here:



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This document will give you information about removing metalware. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is metalware used for?

Metalware includes plates, screws, rods and wires. These are specially made from stainless steel or titanium for operations on bones (see figure 1).

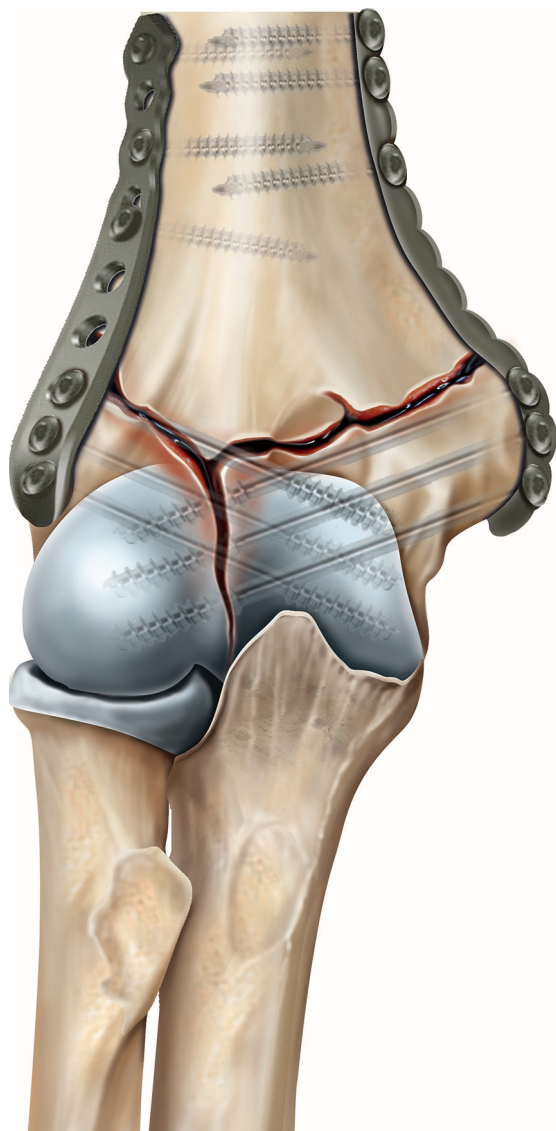


Figure 1
Plates fixed to the bone with screws

What are the benefits of surgery?

Removing the metalware can reduce any pain or discomfort and can help to treat an infection around the metalware. It can also prevent the metalware from disappearing inside the bone, or from getting in the way if you need another operation later.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

Pain or discomfort can sometimes be helped by taking painkillers, avoiding pressure over the metalware and keeping warm when the weather is cold.

If you have an infection around the metalware, you can sometimes keep it under control by taking antibiotics. However, it is not usually possible to cure an infection without removing the metalware.

What does the operation involve?

Various anaesthetic techniques are possible. The operation usually takes 30 minutes to an hour.

Your surgeon will usually remove the metalware through the same cut used to put it in. Small screws or wires can sometimes be hard to find and your surgeon may need to use a larger cut and x-rays. Even larger pieces can be hard to find and remove if they are covered with scar tissue or bone.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring
- Blood clots
- Difficulty passing urine

2 Specific complications

- Failure to remove all metalware
- Damage to nerves
- Weakening of the bone
- Severe pain, stiffness and loss of use of your arm or leg (complex regional pain syndrome)

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day or the day after.

Spend most of the time during the first week with your arm or leg raised so that the swelling settles. It can take six months or longer to recover completely from surgery.

Summary

Metalware is often used in operations to help bones to heal. Once your bones have healed, your surgeon may recommend removing the metalware to reduce or prevent any problems it may cause.

Acknowledgements

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