



## Elbow Conditions – Arthritis

### What is Elbow Arthritis?

Arthritis is a general term for pain and stiffness affecting a joint. In the elbow, the most common form of arthritis is rheumatoid arthritis and post-traumatic arthritis. Post-traumatic arthritis develops after an injury such as a fracture or dislocation.

The elbow becomes stiff, as the soft tissue encapsulating the elbow tries to compensate, adding to the loss of movement.

### What causes Elbow Arthritis?

- Rheumatoid Arthritis is an inflammatory condition that may affect multiple joints in the body
- Traumatic injuries to the elbow joint – including dislocations of the elbow and fractures can lead to elbow arthritis later on.
- Wear and tear - especially in patients over the age of 40

### What are the Signs and Symptoms of Elbow Arthritis?

- Pain: when the elbow is both bent and straightened, and bearing any weight through the arm. If pain is experienced when the arm is resting, this could indicate that the osteoarthritis is more advanced.
- Swelling in the elbow joint
- Stiffness in the elbow joint
- The patient feels unable to use the arm at all to perform everyday activities
- Locking of the elbow joint

### How is Elbow Arthritis Diagnosed?

In order to diagnose your elbow arthritis, one of our elbow surgeons – Mr Jason Harvey or Mr Soong Chua - will perform a physical examination, in which they will move the arm and observe the range of movement and monitor your pain levels. They can also determine if loose bodies (typically cartilage fragments) have developed within the joint, that may affect movement and heighten discomfort.

X-rays and CT or MRI scans will help to determine the extent of the elbow arthritis. Coupled with the clinical examination findings, Mr Chua or Mr Harvey will then decide upon a treatment plan.

### What are the Treatment Options for Elbow Arthritis?

Depending on the individual case, and the extent of the arthritis, a non-surgical approach may be viable. Resting the joint and undergoing physiotherapy may be sufficient, and pain medications can be used for short term relief.

If the arthritis is too advanced to respond to non-surgical options, a surgical option can be taken.

Taking into account the individual situation, Mr Soong Chua or Mr Jason Harvey may be able to perform the surgery arthroscopically (a.k.a. keyhole surgery). Any loose bodies that may be causing pain are removed, and the soft tissue that may be hindering movement is released.

In more severe cases, Mr Harvey or Mr Chua may have to perform elbow replacement surgery.

For more information on the details of Elbow Arthritis Surgery, please see the Elbow Arthritis Surgery Page on our website.