

Frozen Shoulder (Adhesive Capsulitis)



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This information leaflet has been produced by Senior Physiotherapists working at the Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

'Frozen shoulder' is the commonly used name for 'adhesive capsulitis'; a painful restriction in the capsule (soft tissue) surrounding the shoulder joint.

Symptoms

There are three main phases of frozen shoulder. Symptoms can last from a few months to up to 3 years. Most frozen shoulders recover on their own.

1. Painful phase (may last 2 to 9 months)
Pain often starts on the outside of the upper arm gradually and builds with time. Movements of the shoulder begin to reduce.
2. Stiff phase (may last 4 to 12 months)
Shoulder movements become increasingly stiff and difficult, particularly twisting movements such as reaching behind the back or head.
3. Recovery phase (may last 5 to 26 months)
Pain and stiffness in the shoulder starts to resolve and settle. Use and movement of the shoulder become easier.

Causes

A primary frozen shoulder occurs when the cause is unknown. It is more common in people with diabetes and/or with a thyroid gland problem. Women are more commonly affected than men.

A secondary frozen shoulder can occur if the shoulder has been kept still for a prolonged period of time, for example following injury or surgery.

Pain Management

Anti-inflammatory and/or pain medication (tablets or topical gel) can help with the symptoms. Your GP can advise and prescribe the appropriate medications. Applying ice (20 minutes) or warmth can also help with the pain.

Exercises

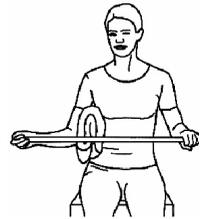
If you have used ice, allow 30 minutes before exercising. Complete two to three times per day:

1. Stand leaning on a table with the arm to be exercised hanging relaxed down. Swing your arm forwards and backwards, left and right and round in circles.
Repeat 5-10 movements in each direction.



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2. Sit with a towel held under the elbow of the arm to be exercised. Keep here throughout the exercise. Hold a stick (e.g. walking stick or mop) with both hands and using your unaffected arm, push to turn the arm to be exercised outwards.
Repeat 5-10 times.



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3. Lie on your back with elbows bent. Hold the wrist of the arm to be exercised with your other hand. Lift the arm over your head assisting with the other hand. Feel a stretch in the shoulder.
Repeat 5-10 times.



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4. Stand or sit. Drop a towel/scarf over your shoulder using your unaffected arm. Hold the other end with the arm to be exercised and gently pull upwards bringing the arm to be exercised up as far as possible. Hold approximately 20 seconds. Repeat 3 times.



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5. Lying on your back with your hands behind your neck and elbows pointing towards the ceiling. Move elbows apart and down to touch the floor. Repeat 5-10 times.



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And finally...

If you have any queries regarding this information or the exercises provided, please contact the

Physiotherapy department: Tel - 01342 414004

Please ask if you would like this leaflet
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Physiotherapy

Issue 1 – Ref: no. 0410

Approved by the Patient Information Group

Print November 2012 – Review November 2015

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