Frozen Shoulder

What is a Frozen Shoulder?
A frozen shoulder occurs when the capsule surrounding the shoulder joint becomes inflamed and painful. The capsule then contracts causing the shoulder joint to stiffen. Frozen shoulder is also known as ‘contracted shoulder’ or ‘capsulitis’.

What are the symptoms of a frozen shoulder?
- Pain around the shoulder
- Stiffness
- Difficulty reaching
- Difficulty sleeping

How is it diagnosed?
Diagnosis is made from your symptoms, the history of the problem, and an examination of your shoulder. Tests, such as X-rays or scans, are not always required.

How is it treated?
- **Pain relief**: over the counter pain relief such as paracetamol and ibuprofen or anti-inflammatory gels may help you to continue exercising.
- **A steroid injection** may be offered if pain is a significant problem
- **Damp heat**: apply a warm and wet compress to your shoulder for 15-20 minutes frequently throughout the day
- **Exercises**: to improve shoulder movement

Symptoms can worsen over a number of months. The initial stage is usually marked by pain and as the months progress, the shoulder stiffens. In most cases, the condition improves within 2 years. It is rare for it to last longer this.

A frozen shoulder can develop:
- without an obvious cause
- after a traumatic event such as a fall
- after immobilisation following surgery or a fracture

You are more likely to get frozen shoulder if you are diabetic, female and aged 40-65.

If you follow the advice and exercises on this leaflet, it is very likely that your symptoms will improve. However, this may take up to 2 years. If your symptoms significantly worsen within this time period, please contact your clinician.
You may experience an initial increase in pain with these exercises. Do not worry, just do less repetitions next time and then gradually build up again. Your physiotherapist will guide you as to how many repetitions to do.

**Standing a foot away from a wall**
Stand with one leg in front of the other
Using a towel place your hands on the towel and try to slide the towel as far as you can up the wall

**Lie on your back. Place a towel under your bent elbow**
Keep your elbow close to your side
Hold a small weight and slowly let your arm stretch sideways away from your body and hold for 20 seconds

**Lie on your back.**
Hold a pole between your hands
Try and lift the pole over your head or until you feel a stretch

**Standing or sitting, hold a pole**
Use you good arm to help move your affected arm out from your side until you feel a stretch

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**References:**


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