

Frozen shoulder (Adhesive capsulitis)

What Is Frozen Shoulder?

Frozen shoulder is another name for adhesive capsulitis. This is a painful condition in which the movement of the shoulder becomes limited. Normally, the soft tissue surrounding the shoulder joint (capsule) is usually stretchy and elastic allowing joint mobility. Frozen shoulder occurs when the capsule initially becomes inflamed, then thickens; resulting in a stiff and painful shoulder.

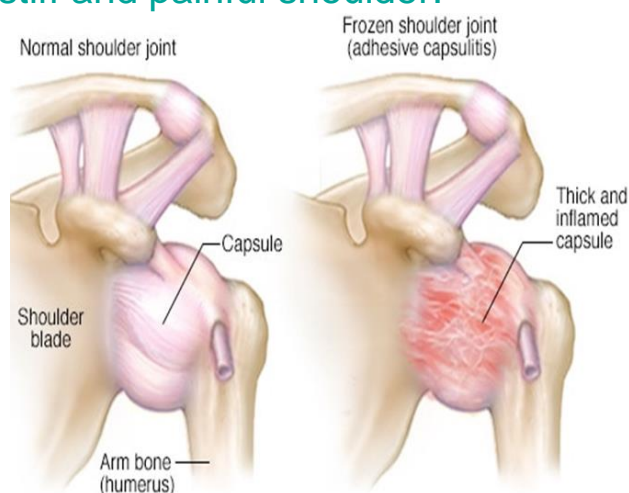
Symptoms

- Pain limiting full range of movement and performing everyday tasks. It is often worse at night when sleeping at night and not just when lying on shoulder.
- Joint stiffness restricting range of movement

Stages of frozen shoulder

Frozen shoulder passes through three stages:

- 1.) Freezing stage: Pain is the biggest problem limiting movement (lasts approximately 3 months)
- 2.) Frozen stage: Pain tends to reduce but the shoulder becomes very stiff (lasts approximately 3-9 months)
- 3.) Thawing stage: Range of movement improves and daily activities should become easier. Stiffness and pain should ease but there is a high chance of reoccurrence (lasts approximately 9-18 months).



How can I help myself?

- Discuss pain relief with your pharmacist
- Pace your daily activities throughout the day.
- Use your arm as comfort allows
- Reduce stress levels through meditation, mindfulness and breathing exercises
- Exercise regularly
- Use heat (i.e. hot water bottle) to relieve pain
- Massage may be possibly help to relieve pain

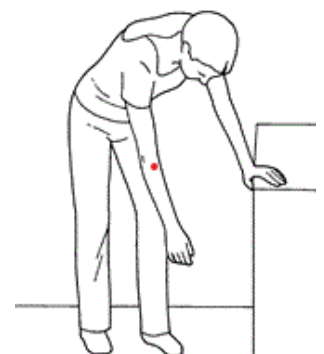
Can Exercises Help?

Exercises can help to improve movement and can be started once pain subsides. In both the freezing and frozen stages, you should move the shoulder little and often and only through comfortable ranges to prevent increased pain. Stretching exercises are useful for these stages. In the thawing phase, strengthening exercises can be slowly introduced, alongside stretches.

Stretching Exercises

You should feel a gentle pull when completing these movements, holding each for one minute, repeating five times.

- Lie on your back with your arms by your side. Use one arm to lift the affected arm up as far as comfortable, lower back down slowly.
- Lean forward, swing the arm backwards and forwards, to the left and right and in a circle all in a pendular motion as though your hand is a weight on the end of a piece of string.



Strengthening exercises

- Hold weights i.e. tin of beans at shoulder height, elbows pointing forward. Push weights up towards the ceiling only as far as comfortable. Return back to the starting position. Repeat as many times as you can.





For further information: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/frozen-shoulder/>

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656 /826319