



# Frozen Shoulder

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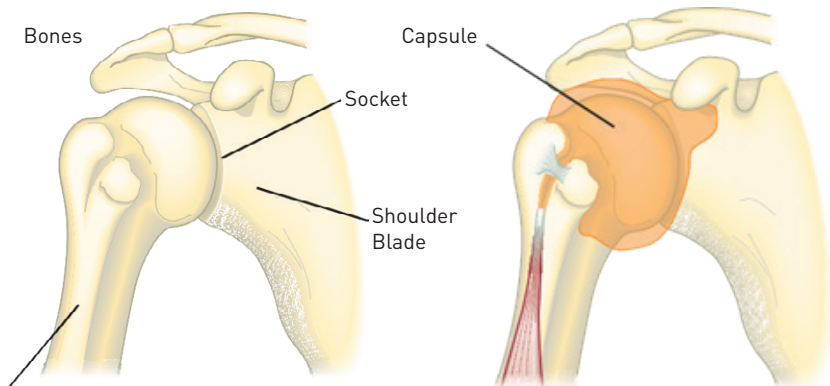
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## Frozen Shoulder

The shoulder is designed to have a large amount of movement so that we can use our hands/arms in a wide variety of positions. Some movement occurs between the shoulder blade and chest wall. However most shoulder movements are at the ball and socket joint.

The ball at the top of the arm bone ('humerus') fits into the shallow socket ('glenoid') which is part of your shoulder blade ('scapula'). There is a loose bag or capsule which surrounds the joint. This is supported by ligaments and muscles.

## Right Shoulder (Viewed from Front)



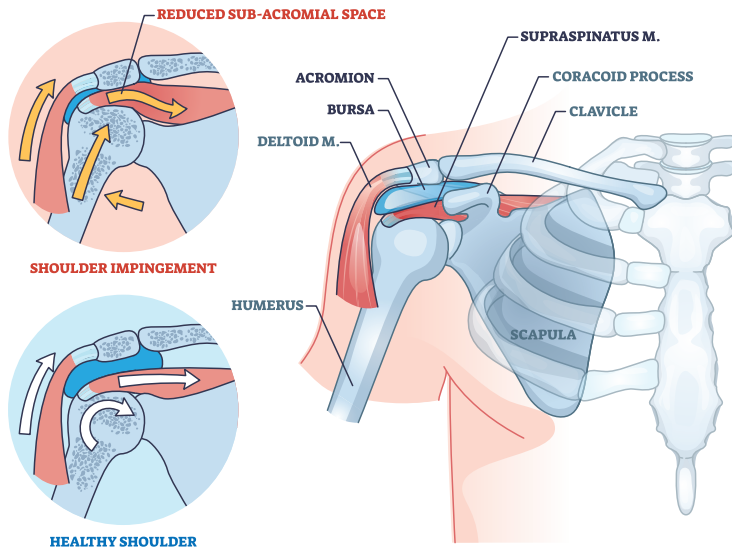
## What is 'frozen shoulder'?

Typically the joint is stiff and initially painful, often starting without an apparent cause. The loose bag (capsule) around the shoulder joint becomes inflamed. The bag then appears to tighten or shrink. This tightening combined with the pain restricts the movement.

## How common is it?

It is most common in people between the ages of 40 and 70 years and has been estimated to affect at least one person in 50 every year.

## There are 3 main phases



### 1) Freezing “Painful” Phase (which can last from 2 to 9 months)

The pain often starts gradually and builds up. It may be felt on the outside of the upper arm and can extend down to the elbow and even into the forearm. It can be present at rest and is worse on movements of the arm. Sleep is often affected, as lying on it is painful or impossible. During this time movements of the shoulder begin to be reduced.

### 2) Frozen “Stiff” Phase (which can last from 4 to 12 months)

The ball and socket joint becomes increasingly stiff, particularly on twisting movements such as trying to put your hand behind your back or head. These movements remain tight even when you try to move the shoulder with your other hand or someone tries to move the shoulder for you.

It is the ball and socket joint which is stiff. The shoulder blade is still free to move around the chest wall, and you may become more aware of this movement.

### 3) Thawing “Recovery” Phase (which can last from 5 to 26 months)

The pain and stiffness starts to resolve during this phase, and you can begin to use your arm in a more normal way.

The total duration of the process is from 12 to 42 months, on average lasting 30 months.

It is important to realize that although the pain and stiffness can be very severe, usually the problem does resolve. It will not bother you forever!

A review of people who had frozen shoulder approximately 7 years earlier shows that only 11% still had mild interference with everyday activities. However, 60% continued to have some stiffness in the shoulder joint when it was measured.

So ultimately, it should have little effect on your daily life, although the joint may remain stiffer when tested.

### What are your treatment options?

There is no one agreed treatment option that has been shown to work. Ultimately the shoulder appears to go through the three phases described and no treatment has altered this pattern. The passage of time is the main treatment!

During the painful phase the emphasis is on pain-relief. Therefore pain-killing tablets and anti-inflammatory tablets may be prescribed.

You can also try using heat, such as a hot water bottle, or cold (ice packs).

Injections into the joint may also be offered if the pain continues. Physiotherapy at this stage is directed at pain-relief (heat, cold and other pain relieving modalities such as electrotherapy). Forcing the joint to move can make it more painful and is best not pursued. You can try using a TENS machine (transcutaneous nerve stimulation) which some people find helpful or try alternative therapies such as acupuncture.

Once stiffness is more of a problem than pain, physiotherapy is indicated. You will be shown specific exercises to try and get the ball and socket moving. Some of these are shown at the end of this leaflet. In addition, the therapist may move the joint for you, trying to regain the normal glides and rolling of the joint.

These are known as joint mobilizations. Muscle based movement techniques may also be used. If movement is not changing with these measures, physiotherapy will be discontinued, although it is appropriate to continue with the suggested exercises to try and maintain the movement that you have.

Hopefully, as the recovery phase starts you will find that the movement gradually increases. This, again, can be a useful time to have physiotherapy to help maximize the movement.

### Surgery

If you have significant pain and stiffness the doctors may offer you a 'Manipulation under Anaesthesia' (MUA) plus arthroscopy operation. There is a separate information leaflet on this. It involves a distension procedure which tries to stretch the loose bag (which is now tight) around the shoulder joint. The tight capsule may be released or removed. In addition the joint is stretched in certain directions to try and free the joint up.



This operation is not done routinely for frozen shoulder, only for those which are very slow to resolve.

## Exercises

These are some examples of exercises to stretch your shoulder. They may be changed for your particular shoulder.

Do exercises regularly 1–2 times a day. You may find them easier to do after a hot shower or bath. Using a hot water bottle is another alternative.

It is normal for you to feel aching or stretching sensations when doing these exercises. However severe and lasting pain (e.g. more than 30 minutes) is not recommended. Reduce the exercises by doing them less often or less forcefully. If the pain is still severe discontinue the exercises and see the physiotherapist or doctor.

### 1. Pendulum

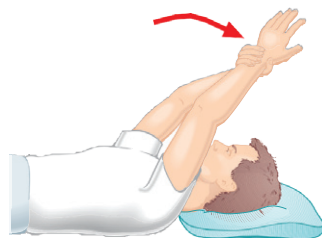
\* exercises shown for right shoulder unless stated.

- Let arm hang down
- Swing arm
- forwards and back
- side to side
- around in circles (both ways)
- Repeat 5–10 times each movement



### 2. Twisting outwards

- Keep elbow into your side throughout
- Push with unaffected arm so hand of problem side is moving away from the mid-line (can be done lying down)
- Do not let your body twist round to compensate
- Repeat 5–10 times



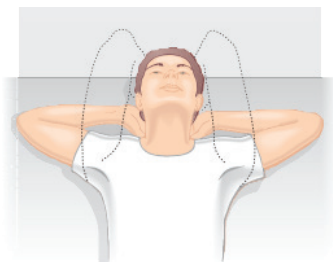
### 3. Arm overhead

- Lying on your back (shown for left shoulder)
- Support problem arm with other hand at wrist and lift it up overhead Do not let your back arch
- Can start with elbows bent Repeat 5–10 times

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#### 4. Twisting outwards/arm overhead

- Place hands behind neck or head, elbows up to ceiling
- Let elbows fall outwards
- Repeat 5–10 times



#### 5. Kneeling on all fours

- Gently sit back towards your heels
- To progress take your knees further away from your hands
- Repeat 5–10 times

#### 6. Sit or stand

- Try and set up a pulley system with the pulley or ring high above you. Pull down with your better arm to help lift the stiff arm up
- Repeat 10 times

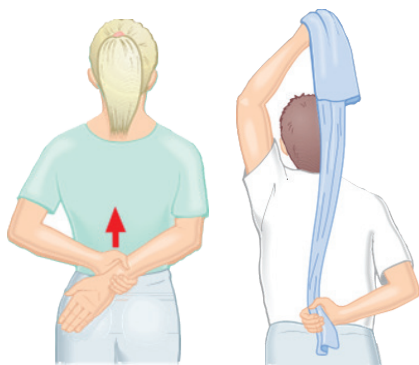
NB. Normally it is best to have the fixed pulley point behind you.



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### 7. Stretching the back of the shoulder (shown for left shoulder)

- Take hand of your problem shoulder across body towards opposite shoulder
- Give gentle stretch by pulling with your uninvolved arm at the elbow
- Sometimes you can feel more stretch if you lie on your back to do the movement
- Repeat 5 times, holding for 20 seconds



### 8. Hand behind back

- Grasp wrist of problem arm and;
- gently stretch hand towards your opposite buttock
- slide your arm up your back
- Can progress and use a towel
- Repeat 5 times

Remember this is often the last movement to return - do not force if painful, rather than stiff