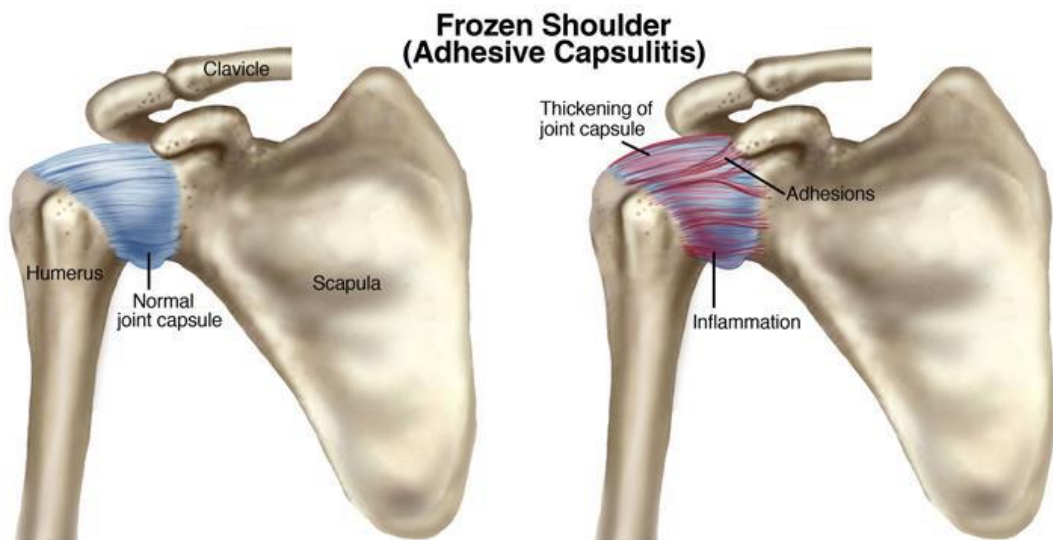


Understanding and Managing Frozen Shoulder

Frozen shoulder, also known as adhesive capsulitis, is a condition defined by pain and restrictions in shoulder movements. It is estimated to affect 2 to 5% of the general population.

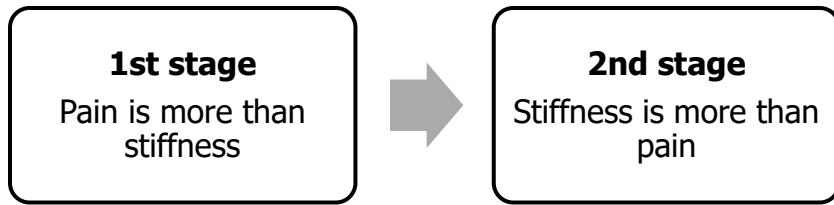
When the joint capsule is inflamed, the joint is thickened and tightened, resulting in loss of movement.



Frozen shoulder can be classified into 2 categories:

- i. Primary: The exact cause of the condition is not known but it is more common in the following groups:
 - People with diabetes mellitus or thyroid conditions
 - Women
 - 40-60 years old
- ii. Secondary: This occurs after an injury or after a period of immobility due to conditions such as an arm fracture, after breast surgery or a stroke.

Frozen shoulder can last between 1 to 3 years. However, most people do recover over time. The condition progresses over 2 stages:



Common symptoms

There is pain and stiffness with shoulder movements like moving your arm above the head, putting on clothes and reaching behind your back. The pain often disrupts sleep at night, especially during the first stage.

What can I do about it?

In the 1st stage, pain is often severe.

- Apply cold pack over the pain area for 20 minutes, 2-3 times a day.
- Put a towel underneath your arm for better support when you sleep. You can also hug a bolster or pillow to keep your arm supported.



- A corticosteroid injection can reduce pain and help with recovery. Speak to your doctor to find out more.

Gentle shoulder movements can be performed. Do not overstretch at this stage as that may increase pain and delay recovery.

In the 2nd stage, pain is lesser, but you would still experience restrictions in your movements.

- You may start to stretch a bit more to improve the range of movement.
- Start light strengthening exercises.

Regardless of the stage of the condition, it is important that you still maintain a healthy lifestyle and diet. General physical activity like walking is recommended for general well-being, improving mood, and preventing depression.

For people with diabetes or thyroid conditions, exercise and lifestyle changes are important in the overall management and recovery.

Physiotherapy exercises

You may experience slight pain as you begin to move. It is important that you do the exercises in a relaxed manner by breathing in and out normally. Please consult your doctor or physiotherapist if you feel increased pain when doing the exercises.

The guide below can help to make sure you are exercising at the right level¹.





0-3 out of 10: Continue.


4-5 out of 10: Reduce the number of times, amount, and speed of movement.



6 or above: Stop exercise. Consider another exercise instead.

You may do these exercises² for 2-3 times per day.

<p style="text-align: center;">Pendulum</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand with your unaffected arm supported on a table. • Let your painful arm hang relaxed, draw small clockwise circles for 10 times. • Change direction and repeat for 10 times or as tolerated.
<p style="text-align: center;">Table forward slide</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place your hands on a towel. • Slide forward to a tolerable range and return to the start position. • Repeat for 10 times or as tolerated.

When your pain has improved, you may attempt some of the following exercises.

<p style="text-align: center;">Stick-assisted abduction (sideway) stretch</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand and grip one end of the stick with the arm to be exercised. • Lift the stick up sideways by assisting with the other arm. • You should feel a gentle stretch in the shoulder. • Repeat 10 times.
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<p>Stick-assisted external rotation stretch</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit or stand with both elbows at right angles. Place a rolled towel between your elbow and side. • Hold a stick with both hands. • Push the stick to move the arm outwards until you feel a gentle stretch. • Repeat 10 times.
<p>Wall push-up</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand facing a wall with your arms straight and hands on the wall. • Do push-ups against the wall keeping your body in a straight line. Keep your chin tucked in. • Repeat 10 times. • You should feel slightly tired in your arm muscles.

Please note that the instructions illustrated in this handout is strictly for information purpose. If you have any queries, kindly proceed to check with your doctor or physiotherapist.

References:

1. Wong-Baker FACES Foundation. (2020, April 28). Home - Wong-Baker FACES Foundation. <https://wongbakerfaces.org/>
2. General exercises 2nd Edition by PhysioTools (PT1) (2016). PhysioTools.