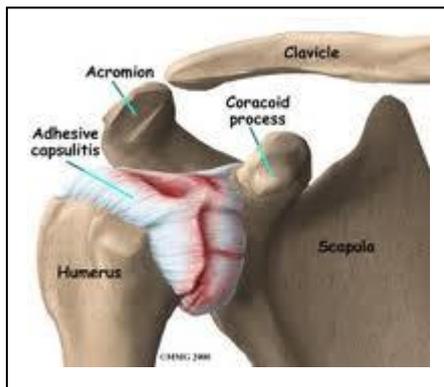


Frozen (Contracted) shoulder

The shoulder joint is made up of three bones: the scapula (shoulder blade), the humerus (upper arm bone), and the clavicle (collarbone). The joint capsule covers the shoulder joint. In a contracted/ frozen shoulder, scar-like tissue forms in the shoulder capsule. This limits the shoulder's ability to move, and causes the shoulder to 'freeze'.



What causes frozen shoulder?

This is largely unknown. It is thought that some scar tissue forms in the shoulder capsule. The capsule is a thin tissue that covers and protects the shoulder joint. The scar tissue may cause the capsule to thicken, contract and limit the movement of the shoulder. The reason why the scar tissue forms is not known. It may begin after a shoulder injury, fracture or surgery or occur for no reason.

Frozen shoulder affects about 1 in 50 adults at some stage in their life. It most commonly occurs in people aged between 40 and 60. It is more common in women. It is more common than average in people who have diabetes and some other conditions, including overactive thyroid disease and Parkinson's disease.

What are the symptoms of frozen shoulder?

Frozen shoulder causes both shoulder pain and a reduced range of motion (stiffness) of the joint. Pain is the initial symptom coming on gradually and the shoulder can be particularly painful at night. This typically lasts 2-9 months. As the shoulder pain reduces the range of motion becomes more limited. The pain and stiffness can make it difficult to do regular activities like getting dressed, driving and working. Eventually the stiffness relieves and the movement returns.

There is variation in the severity and length of symptoms and the whole cycle can last up to two years. In most cases symptoms fully resolve, however some people are left with long term symptoms, most usually loss of full movement.

How is frozen shoulder diagnosed?

Diagnosis is based on your medical history and physical examination. Frozen shoulder will not usually show on x-ray.

What is the treatment for frozen shoulder?

Ice may be helpful in reducing pain. Apply a bag of frozen peas or a cold gel pack wrapped in a damp towel directly to the affected area for 20 minutes. Some people prefer **heat** to ice. Apply a wheat bag or hot water bottle wrapped in a towel directly to the area for 20 minutes. A warm shower or bath may also be beneficial.

It is important to find a **comfortable resting position**. Try supporting your arm on a pillow or cushion or placing a pillow behind the shoulder when lying on your back in bed.

Painkillers/anti-inflammatory medication as prescribed by your GP.

Gentle exercises to keep the shoulder from stiffening up (see attached). These must be done regularly and within pain. It is normal for you to experience aching, discomfort and stretching when doing the exercises but decrease the exercises if you experience intense or lasting pain.

Physiotherapy to maintain movement and function of the shoulder and treatments to help control the pain may be helpful.

In the initial painful stage a **steroid injection** in the shoulder can give some relief. The steroid reduces inflammation in the shoulder capsule.