

# Frozen Shoulder



**What is Frozen shoulder?** - It is inflammation, scarring, thickening and shrinkage of the capsule that surrounds the shoulder joint and is also known as 'adhesive capsulitis'. It causes pain and restriction of motion, is most common from the age of 40-60 and twice as common in women. The recovery time can be prolonged with an average duration of 18 months.

**What Causes Frozen Shoulder?** - It can be due to a fall onto the shoulder or outstretched arm. It may also be caused by immobilisation of the shoulder but in some cases, there is no apparent cause.

**What are the symptoms?** - Pain is usually the first symptom followed by a loss of motion which may cause a reluctance to move the arm. You may also experience weakness in the shoulder and pain may radiate into your neck, upper back, arm and hand

**What physiotherapy treatments are most commonly used?** - Physiotherapy will consist of the treatments below to reduce the

inflammation and pain with an exercise / postural programme to return the range of motion.

**Massage** - encompassing a variety of techniques and is given with sufficient pressure through the superficial tissue to reach the deep lying structures. It is used to increase blood flow, decrease swelling, reduce muscle spasm and promote normal tissue repair.

**Mobilisation** - is a manual technique where the joint and soft tissues are gently moved by the physiotherapist to restore normal range, lubricate joint surfaces and relieve pain.

**Ultrasonic therapy** - transmits sound waves through the tissues stimulating the body's chemical reactions and therefore healing process, just as shaking a test tube in the laboratory speeds up a chemical reaction.

**Interferential therapy** - introduces a small electrical current into the tissues and can be used at varying frequencies for differing treatment effects. E.g. pain relief, muscle or nerve stimulation, promoting blood flow and reducing inflammation.

## Other treatments that could be used

**Acupuncture** - an oriental technique of introducing needles into the skin to increase or decrease energy flow to promote pain relief and healing.

**Injection Therapy** is a specialist procedure, which needs the consent of your G.P, a non-harmful steroid and local anaesthetic are injected directly into the injured structure. It has a dramatic effect on removing inflammation and promoting healing.

## What can you do to help your condition?

**Exercise / Postural programme** – This is the most important part of the rehabilitation, your therapist will instruct you as to which exercises to begin with, when to add the others, as well as how to progress the exercises.

**Medication** - Ask your GP or Pharmacist for advice on the best medication for your condition.

**Apply an ice pack** - for a maximum of 20 minutes. A bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp cloth works well because it moulds to the shape of the arm. Ensure that you do not apply ice directly to the skin as this can cause an ice burn.

**Ergonomics** - ensure all your seating is encouraging good posture and your work station is set up correctly.

**What if physiotherapy does not help or resolve my condition?** - It is very rare that physiotherapy does not give great benefit, in these cases a cortisone injection may be appropriate and in very extreme cases surgery is a possible option. These options can be discussed with your therapist if appropriate.