

Frozen Shoulder Injury Help Sheet



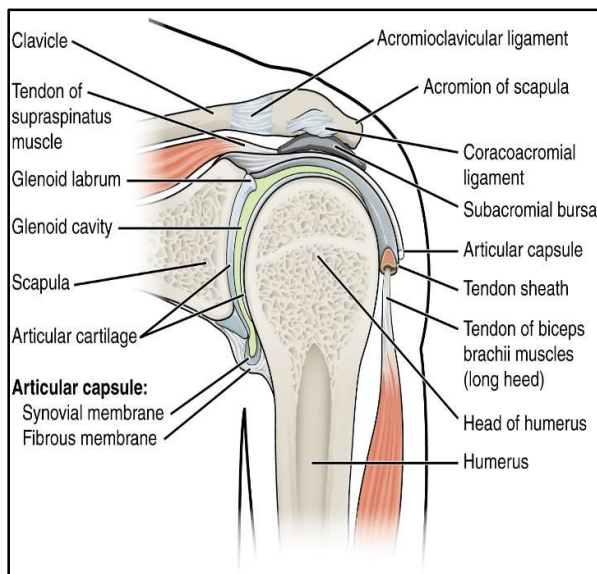
This sheet is meant as information for my clients suffering from a Frozen Shoulder. It is always advisable to seek a medical/ clinical diagnosis and support for treatment.

What is Frozen Shoulder?

The medical term is adhesive capsulitis.

The shoulder joint is supported by tendons and muscles, and the socket is surrounded by a capsule. This capsule fluid can become thickened, or inflamed and stops movement without pain in the area.

The image below is taken from: <https://philschatz.com/anatomy-book>, which is published by OpenStax and free to download.



Stages:

1. **Freezing** – This is normally the initial stage where you have an ache on the outside of the shoulder turning to pain with movement, then it increases. Pain at night is common, causing disturbed sleep. This stage can last from 2-9 months.
2. **Frozen** – Normally the pain reduces, and the lack of movement increases. It can be hard to do normal everyday movements. This stage can last from 4 months to a year.
3. **Thawing** – This is the final stage where the range of movement increases, it can be a long process and take up to 3 years.

Causes:

It is not fully known what causes frozen shoulder, although there are certain things that increase the risk. For example:

- Previous injury or surgery to the shoulder joint, which has caused a lack of mobility.
- The following medical conditions – Diabetes, thyroid issues, heart disease or stroke.

What is the timeframe for recovery?

You can see from the stages section it can be a few months to years. As with all injuries it will depend on the severity, the speed of assessment and treatment as well as the on-going maintenance and resolution of the factors that caused it.

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If you have had the symptoms described earlier for a little while it is advisable to get it reviewed by a medical professional. They are likely to ask how long it has been going on for, any factors that might have caused it, like injury or surgery and then they will do some functional assessments.

You might be referred to a physiotherapist for exercises that help with movement to speed up recovery. A doctor might also suggest a steroid injection into the shoulder joint for the pain.

Self-Help and Stretching Exercises:

- When in the initial stage with pain, it is advisable to continue to move the joint.
- You might want to confirm with a doctor or pharmacist what pain killers or anti-inflammatory options could aid you in reducing the pain to continue movement.
- Support the arm with pillows at night, this could also help reduce the likelihood of you lying on the arm or shoulder and causing more pain.
- When you have recovered from the shoulder injury, ask a fitness professional to show you ways to strengthen and exercise your shoulders safely, to help maintain movement and reduce the potential risk of reoccurrence.

Do these on both shoulders and arms where possible:

- Pendulum stretch, stand straight, and relax the shoulders. Lean over and all the affected arm to hang. Then move the body so that the arm swings in a small circle clockwise 10 times and then anti-clockwise 10 times. This can also be done, with the arm moving forwards and backwards, and side to side, to mix the exercise up.
- Arm pit stretch, stand in front of something where you can rest your arm at nipple height. Place your arm out straight in front of you, then slowly bend your knees to lower your position, keeping your back straight. Then stand up, repeat this 10-20 times, where possible getting lower each day.
- Cross body arm stretch, sit or stand in a comfortable position and then use the non-affected arm to lift the elbow on the affected arm. Bring it across the body as far as possible, you should feel the stretch in the shoulder, hold for 10-15 seconds and then slowly lower. Repeat 10-20 times.
- Arm circles, sit with your back straight and place a hand on the same shoulder, then make small circles with your elbow in the air (this is at 90 degrees to the site of your body). Move the elbow clockwise and anti-clockwise, 10 times both ways. This can be repeated 2-3 times per day.
- Finger walk, stand at an arm's length in front of a wall, then reach out with the affected arm, reach out and touch the wall with your fingertips. The arm should be slightly bent when at waist height. Walk your fingers up the wall, moving your arm up as far as is comfortable to reach. Then walk the fingers back down the wall. Repeat 10-20 times.
- Towel stretch, use a towel that is almost the length of your spine. Standing hold the top of the towel with the non-affected arm behind you, then with the affected arm hold the bottom of the towel. Gently move the towel, pulling at each end to help the shoulder move and stretch. Repeat this 10-20 times.

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You can also use this link to the British Elbow and Shoulder Society, where they provide a YouTube video on exercises to support and move the shoulder: [Frozen Shoulder – British Elbow & Shoulder Society \(bess.ac.uk\)](https://www.bess.ac.uk)