



### **Adhesive Capsulitis**

**Definition:** Adhesive capsulitis is a condition where the shoulder joint capsule (surrounding tissue that helps to support the shoulder) tightens, causing pain and limited movement of the shoulder.

**Common Terms:** Frozen shoulder.

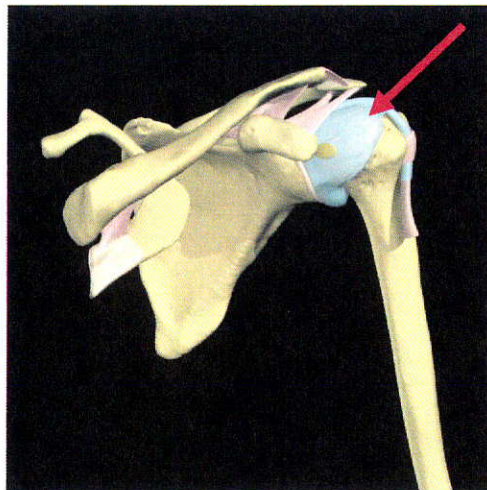
**Typical Mechanism of Injury:** The true cause of this condition is not always known. However, it is oftentimes seen following an upper arm injury, where a person chooses not to use the arm for activities because of pain. Other conditions that can lead to a frozen shoulder are: diabetes, shoulder trauma, open heart surgery and cervical disk disease.

**Common Signs and Symptoms:** Shoulder pain and stiffness occur over time. While the pain increases, the motion in the shoulder decreases. Significant pain usually occurs at night disturbing sleep. A decrease in movement develops in all forms, especially with raising the shoulder overhead and using it to perform tasks such as combing hair, fastening buttons, and reaching behind the back.

**Common Treatment:** Treatment protocols for this condition include gradual, gentle range of motion exercises focusing on assisted (passively) stretching the shoulder. In many cases, supervised rehabilitation is required as individuals may have a difficult time performing self exercises. Medications may be prescribed to help joint swelling and pain. Other tools from ice, to the use of ultrasound and electrical stimulation may be of benefit. In some cases where motion cannot be regained, a surgical procedure referred to as a manipulation under anesthesia or shoulder arthroscopy may also be recommended.

**Prevention:** Education regarding how this condition can develop from disuse can be very helpful in preventing its onset. Anyone who has had a serious injury to the upper arm that requires the area to be immobilized or not used for an extended period of time should ask their physician and/or rehabilitation specialist what they can do to avoid developing a frozen shoulder.

**Expectations:** Supervised rehabilitation is extremely important in assisting recovery from a frozen shoulder. Most individuals find it extremely difficult to self-treat this condition. It is also important to understand that even if you undergo a surgical procedure such as a manipulation, the rehabilitation after surgery is just as important to help restore the gains made in surgery.



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