

## FROZEN SHOULDER

As far as joints are concerned, the shoulder is truly remarkable. It moves in absolutely every direction. The only other joint that is even somewhat close in terms of the different type of movements is in hip. But even there the flexibility and range of the hip is much more limited.

You need a lot of movement in the shoulder to perform everyday activities. The ligaments that hold the upper arm bone, the humerus, in the socket are quite loose to allow for this wide range of movement. Because they are lax, they don't do much to hold the shoulder together.

What really holds the shoulder together and stabilizes the joint is the rotator cuff muscles. The rotator cuff is not just one muscle. It's actually four small muscles that run from the shoulder blade to the humerus.

These muscles completely surround the humerus like a sleeve or cuff. The muscles are dynamic so they can contract to stabilize the shoulder or relax to allow for the movement you need. It makes movement of our shoulder so free and easy that we often take it for granted.

### HOW DOES A SHOULDER "FREEZE"?

Frozen shoulder, also called adhesive capsulitis, usually starts with a minor injury. For example, someone may jar their shoulder by tripping and breaking the fall with an outstretched arm. It may also start after an inflammatory problem, like a little tendinitis or bursitis of the shoulder.

With the injury comes some pain. The injured person typically limits their movement or stops using the shoulder to avoid any discomfort. Although it's important to rest a part of your body if it's injured, the rest period should be limited to just the first 24 or 48 hours following an injury. If you restrict your movement for any longer than that, adhesions start to form in the shoulder.

Adhesions are simply constricting bands of fibrous tissue that the body produces. You are always moving your shoulders, even if it's brushing your hair or reaching behind you to close the car door.

Because of this ongoing movement, adhesions don't normally have an opportunity to develop. Limit your movement for several days, however, and this fibrous tissue starts to stick to the ligaments in your shoulder, especially in the lower part of the joint where the ligaments are most lax.

Once these adhesions begin to form, the shoulder starts to feel stiff and uncomfortable. You'll limit your movement in response to the pain and reduced movement causes more stiffness. Before you know it, you're trapped in what seems to be a vicious cycle.

If you don't take care of the problem immediately, it will progress from a little discomfort to severe pain that interferes with your daily activities and your sleep. It can become difficult or impossible to do simple things like brushing your hair, doing up your bra behind your back or even reaching your arm back to put it into a sleeve of your coat.

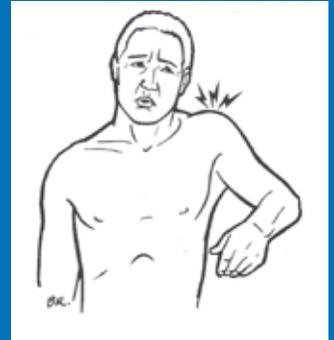
Over time, you will be unable to lift your arm. Your shoulder, in a sense, becomes frozen, hence the name. The pain in the shoulder can be intolerable and will likely spread into your neck and arm as your body tries to compensate for the lost movement.

If you catch the problem early, you can recover relatively quickly with some regular massage and some self-care exercises that you can do at home. Otherwise expect a lengthy and somewhat uncomfortable course of treatment to regain your normal pain-free movement.

The conventional treatment for a severe case is manipulation under anaesthetic. A surgeon will put you under and while you are asleep will force your shoulder through a full range of motion to pull apart the adhesions. Sometimes surgery is used. In either case, don't expect a quick fix. This kind of treatment is usually followed by several months of physiotherapy or massage therapy.

For modern cases, doctors may use oral anti-inflammatory drugs, or they may inject cortisone or aesthetic medications into your shoulder to reduce the pain and inflammation.

Your massage therapist will typically treat frozen shoulder through a combination of massage techniques, stretching and joint mobilization procedures. This will be combined with exercise that you must do between treatments. Your therapist will suggest a treatment schedule that is best for you. You will likely need frequent short treatments that may last for many weeks.



With frozen shoulder, you lose the ability to lift your arm to the side. Not only is the shoulder painful, but also the neck and back muscles start to ache as they try to compensate for the limited shoulder movement.

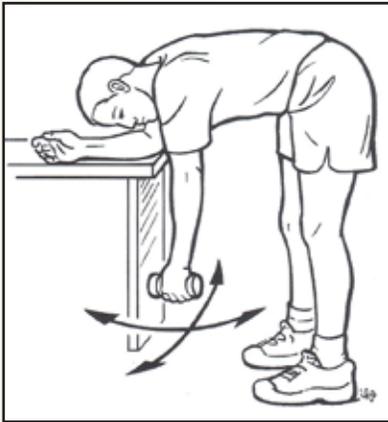
“ See your massage therapist immediately after any shoulder injury to prevent frozen shoulder. ”

## AN ONCE OF PREVENTION ...

Benjamin Franklin is noted for saying, "An ounce of prevention is worth a point of cure." This cliché couldn't be any more true when it comes to a frozen shoulder. To avoid the pain disability and cost associated with treating frozen shoulder, be proactive.

If you injure your shoulder, see your massage therapist immediately. They can help the injury heal faster and give you exercise to prevent frozen shoulder from developing. It's usually minor shoulder injuries that lead to frozen shoulder, so don't think that because it's a small injury that it will be fine if left alone.

If you have any shoulder pain, even minor pain that lasts for more than two days, pick up the phone and call your massage therapist. Unless you've seen someone with frozen shoulder, it's hard to understand the pain and suffering you'll save yourself.



Your massage therapist can give you exercises to prevent or treat frozen shoulder. This "Pendulum exercise" is used to maintain mobility in your shoulder. Bend forward from your hips and support the weight of your upper body. Let your shoulder relax and gently swing a small weight back and forth.

## THE FROZEN SHOULDER MIMIC

Here's something that most health professionals including your doctor, doesn't likely know: trigger points in one of the rotator cuff muscles can mimic the exact same symptoms as frozen shoulder.

**Call for an appointment**  
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Sohaila has been working as a registered massage therapist for over 15 years. She has practiced in most professional settings, including, Medical buildings, on-site office work, sports medicine rehabilitation clinics, and spas. Prior to Massage Therapy,



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Baldvin has been working as a massage therapist for over 15 years. During such time, he has had the amazing opportunity to take such extensive courses such as myofascial release, sports massage, deep muscle tissue therapy and stretching, cranial sacral massage, and TMJ treatments. He continues to actively learn new techniques through such continuing education programs.



There's a rotator cuff muscle underneath the shoulder blade (scapula) that is called subscapularis. It can develop knots or trigger points that cause symptoms that are almost exactly like symptoms of frozen shoulder. These knots refer pain into the shoulder in the same way and cause your movement to be limited in a similar way.

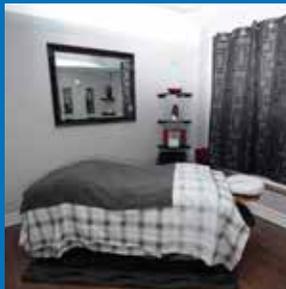
Unlike a frozen shoulder, however these trigger points can be deactivated sometimes very quickly. Relief can be had after only a few sessions.

“ That the subscapularis muscle is critically involved {in frozen shoulder} is usually overlooked ”

~~ Trigger point specialist,  
Dr. Janet Travell, MD

Most massage therapist are able to assess for these trigger points and help eliminate them from your muscles. So if you suspect that you are developing frozen shoulder, book an appointment with your massage therapist so they can check for this frozen shoulder copycat.

Your therapist may do hands on work to the muscle to get rid of the knot or they may use a gently stretch technique where they will have you first contract and then relax the muscle as they pull it into a stretched position. There are a variety of approaches that can be taken and your massage therapist will choose the most appropriate techniques for your needs.



Tell us what would make your visit more enjoyable and we will try to accommodate you.

Heat pads, relaxing music and soft lighting for your complete relaxation.



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