



**Ask  
Dr. Michael  
The Pain Expert**



Dr. Michael Clifford

### **Frozen Shoulder**

*“Since injuring my shoulder it has become extremely painful and now I can’t move my arm in any direction. What should I do?” John M.*

The shoulder pain and limited range of motion that you are experiencing are the result of a condition called adhesive capsulitis, more commonly known as “frozen shoulder”. Whereas a number of conditions of the shoulder can cause similar shoulder pain and some restricted range of motion, the distinguishing feature of frozen shoulder is the restriction in all directions.

#### Symptoms of Frozen Shoulder

Symptoms of frozen shoulder include shoulder pain which may increase with rotation, weakness, stiffness, and gradual, progressive loss of both active and passive range of motion in all planes. In some cases the pain may radiate down to the elbow. Symptoms may become so severe that use of the arm becomes difficult, and pain may make sleep uncomfortable or awaken the patient. Usually only one shoulder is affected.

#### Causes of Frozen Shoulder

Frozen shoulder is caused by inflammation, scarring and shrinkage of the capsule that surrounds the shoulder joint. It usually occurs as the result of an injury, such as a tendon tear, tendinitis, bursitis, or rotator cuff injury. The risk of developing frozen shoulder is increased by diabetes, inflammatory or degenerative arthritis of the shoulder joint, chest surgery, and long-term immobility of the shoulder joint.

#### Treatment for Frozen Shoulder

Frozen shoulder requires aggressive and diligent treatment to prevent the condition from becoming permanent. A comprehensive approach that includes gentle chiropractic manipulations, ice packs, ultrasound, interferential, myofascial release, trigger point therapy, transverse massage, stretching, range of motion and strengthening exercises, and anti-inflammatories is often essential for recovery. The length of time of treatment depends on the degree of scarring of the tissues of the shoulder capsule, and can take from weeks to months. It is of vital importance that the shoulder is not reinjured during the rehabilitation period, and heavy lifting or sudden jerking movement of the affected shoulder should be avoided. In rare cases frozen shoulder may be resistant to treatment, and arthroscopic surgery may be necessary to release the scar tissue. Another alternative is manipulation under anesthesia to physically break up the scar tissue of the joint capsule.

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