

Frozen Shoulder (Adhesive Capsulitis)



Overview

This is stiffening of your shoulder. It happens over time, and you may not know what caused it. With a frozen shoulder, it can be hard for you to be as active as you like.

Causes

We don't fully understand this condition. It's a problem with the shoulder's joint capsule. That's a membrane that surrounds the joint. With frozen shoulder, this membrane thickens. Bands of tissue we call "adhesions" develop. Frozen shoulder may be linked to swelling. It can develop after an injury. It can happen after surgery, or after your shoulder is immobilized for a period of time. And, it may be linked to diabetes and to other diseases.

Symptoms

Frozen shoulder is most often a problem for older people. It starts slowly, with mild pain. Over a few months, the pain gets worse. It can be hard for you to sleep. You begin to have trouble lifting your arm, or moving it backwards. With time, pain can lessen, but your shoulder may become so stiff that you can barely move it.

Treatment

A frozen shoulder will usually get better on its own, even without any treatment. However, this can take up to three years. You may benefit from treatment options such as medications, injections and physical therapy. Surgery can help, too. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that's right for you.

