

FROZEN SHOULDER

« Frozen shoulder » is the common term for the condition « adhesive capsulitis ». Both names embody what has happened. The capsule (tissue that surrounds the joint) has become inflamed (“itis”) and is sticking to itself. This results in an extremely stiff “frozen” shoulder. The symptoms are pain, stiffness and weakness that occur in different proportions at different times.

There are various possible causes for this condition such as trauma – direct trauma as in a fall or indirect trauma such as post-surgery to the arms or chest – as well as microtrauma caused by repetitive movements.

The treatment approach is concentrated around restoring movement. Specific exercises will be an integral part of treatment as well as manual therapy treatments to the shoulder, neck and shoulder blade. Depending on the severity of the pain, heat, ultrasound, and electrotherapy may be used. Usually, the pain intensity tends to decrease before the mobility improves. The initial exercises will be aimed at restoring shoulder movements as well as correcting posture. Eventually, strengthening exercises will be introduced. If the capsule of the shoulder joint is very tight and difficult to stretch, an injection technique known as “distension arthrogram” may be suggested. This is done by a medical specialist. This will help to decrease the number of fibres in the capsule that are stuck together, leading to an increase in your mobility. This may be repeated up to 3 times. This condition will improve with time; however, it is a long and slow process. Many people find it very frustrating as it does take time but it is extremely important to be patient and diligent with the exercise program.

Remember that there is light at the end of the tunnel!