



SHOULDER CAPSULITIS

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

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Shoulder pain is very common and there are a lot of different causes of pain around this complex joint.

WHAT IS A FROZEN SHOULDER

Inflammation of the capsule (*lining*) of the joint can lead to the development of a stiff shoulder. Sometimes trivial trauma will trigger the inflammation in the capsule but frequently there is no reason for the onset. The shoulder becomes gradually more painful due to the inflammation and then stiffens. Basically the lining of the joint gets '*stuck together*' so any shoulder movement increases your pain.

Typically, this is a condition which improves spontaneously, but as recovery can be slow the majority of patients will seek help. If untreated the pain may last for around 6-8 months although the stiffness may remain for up to two and a half years but gradually improves with time.

SYMPTOMS

You may experience some or all of these symptoms

- Pain felt around the joint, often spreading down the arm to the wrist
- Pain worse at night, with disturbed sleep & difficulty lying on that side
- Restricted movement causing loss of function

TREATMENT

It is important in the early stages of this condition to prevent stiffness from setting in. It is therefore important to exercise your shoulder within the limits of bearable pain. It is sometimes **NOT** appropriate to be referred to Physiotherapy. In this case your GP will manage your symptoms with appropriate medication and self management exercises.

In some cases, a course of corticosteroid injections will be the best treatment. There are administered over a 6 week period to help settle your pain but the movement won't return for several months. Once the pain has eased with injections, the more you push the shoulder with exercise as advised by your Physio or GP, the more quickly it will get better.

PHYSIOTHERAPY

If you are prescribed painkillers and exercises only by your GP, you should carry out the exercises every day.

If you have received a course of corticosteroid injections from your GP or Physiotherapist, your pain should be settling allowing you to exercise your shoulder to stretch the joint capsule and improve your movement and function. This should be done two to three times a day for improvement (*see Patient Exercise Leaflet*). You may be referred to Physiotherapy at this stage for more vigorous stretching.



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