

Frozen Shoulder

Advice and treatment

Frozen shoulder is a condition where the shoulder feels stiff and painful. Symptoms can last from 2–4 years.

For some, frozen shoulder can follow three stages – painful stage frozen stage and ‘thawing’ or resolution stage – but these can be different from person to person.

The following advice and exercises may help you manage your shoulder problem. If you have further pain, please contact your GP for further information.

Signs and symptoms

We’re unsure why frozen shoulder develops. In some cases it can develop on its own and with some following trauma to the shoulder or arm.

Frozen shoulder typically affects those aged 40-60. If you do have frozen shoulder, you may experience:

- A severe and constant pain primarily in your upper arm – but can include your elbow, forearm and hand
- Positional ‘night pain’ from lying on the affected side when you sleep
- Restricted movement in your shoulder, which can limit your ability to lift your arm above your head and can make getting dressed and doing activities difficult

You can find out more about frozen shoulder – including causes, symptoms and treatment suggestions – from the NHS website.

Visit NHS website [nhs.uk/conditions/frozen-shoulder/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/frozen-shoulder/)

Treating frozen shoulder

What you can do to help

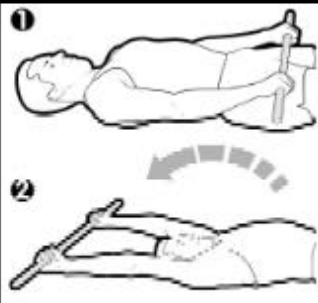

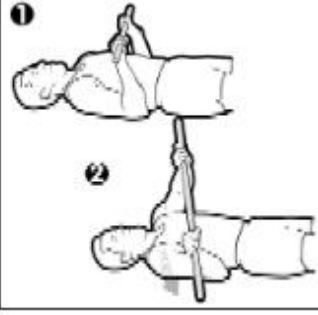
There are steps you can take to help reduce the pain, including some gentle physiotherapy exercises you can perform slowly.

- Anti-inflammatory tablets, gels and creams can help reduce pain and swelling – talk to your GP or pharmacist for further advice
- Applying heat (e.g. hot water bottle or wheat-pack) or cold (a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp tea-towel) to the tender area for 10 minutes twice a day can help reduce pain – however please don't do this if your skin sensation is impaired
- Use a pillow to support your arm when you're sitting or sleeping, and try lying on your other side or your back
- Make small changes to the way you do activities, such as using your other arm to reach for items out of a high cupboard

Exercises

Here are some exercises you can do to improve the strength and flexibility in your shoulder. Start slowly, and gradually increase the intensity over time.

It is normal for these exercises to feel a little uncomfortable, but stop if they feel painful

	<p>ACTIVE-ASSISTED SHOULDER FLEXION</p> <p>Lying on your back while holding a pole (1) raise your arms above your head as far as possible within comfortable range (2). Lead the movement with your unaffected arm. Return to the start position and repeat.</p> <p>SETS & REPS: 3 x 20-30</p> <p>FREQUENCY: 2-3 x day</p>
	<p>ACTIVE-ASSISTED SHOULDER ABDUCTION</p> <p>Standing while holding a pole (e.g. cane / broom handle) in both hands with your arms at sides, slowly raise your affected arm out to the side. Raise your arm until you feel a stretch, assisting the movement with your unaffected arm. Hold for 5 seconds then slowly lower and repeat.</p> <p>SETS & REPS: 3 x 20-30</p> <p>FREQUENCY: 2-3 x day</p>
	<p>ACTIVE-ASSISTED EXTERNAL ROTATION STRETCH</p> <p>Lying on your back while holding a pole and your elbows bent to 90°, rotate your affected shoulder away from your body as far as you can within comfortable range. Use your unaffected arm to push the pole further, increasing the rotation in your affected shoulder until you feel a stretch. Hold.</p> <p>SETS & REPS: 30sec hold</p> <p>FREQUENCY: 3-4 x day</p>

Contact your GP

Frozen shoulder can often be treated through a combination of exercises, changes to lifestyle, medication and physiotherapy support.

Your GP may consider sending you for an X-ray to rule out other causes of a stiff and painful shoulder.

They may also refer you to our physiotherapist team, as symptoms of a frozen shoulder can overlap with other conditions.

This leaflet is intended to support the advice you've received from your GP and Physiotherapist. Please contact them if you have any further questions.

The exercise diagrams have been created by The Rehab Lab.

Visit Rehab Lab website TheRehabLab.com/

How to contact us

Visit our webpage berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/physiotherapy

East Berkshire: Windsor, Maidenhead, Slough, Ascot, Bracknell

Call [0300 365 5678](tel:03003655678)

Email mskphysioadmin@berkshire.nhs.uk

West Berkshire: Wokingham, Newbury, Reading

Call [0118 9041 777](tel:01189041777)

Email admin.rdgphysio@berkshire.nhs.uk

