

## **FROZEN SHOULDER**

*Frozen shoulder is a condition that affects the shoulder joint causing significant degrees of pain and limitation to movement. The condition lasts for a substantial period of time. Frozen shoulder involves the capsule of the joint, which is a thickened collagenous sack that surrounds the socket of the joint and holds synovial fluid-the lubricating gel-within the joint. During frozen shoulder, this capsule becomes inflamed, scarred and contracts. Your symptoms and clinical signs reflect the stage of the condition.*

### **Causes**

The exact cause of frozen shoulder remains a mystery. Minor trauma has been suspected but many people do not have any trauma prior to the onset. The most recent research suggests a type of autoimmune disease in which the body attacks itself and sets up an inflammatory reaction. This inflammation snowballs and quickly becomes unbearable.

### **Presentation**

Initially frozen shoulder may start as a distinct ache, which lasts long after activity. Quickly, it starts to annoy the sleep pattern and you may not be able to lie on it.

### **Stages**

Frozen shoulder passes through four distinct phases. Initially, pain dominates the presentation but you are able to move your shoulder well. In stage two, inflammation, pain and then scarring dominate with increasingly more restriction to movement. Stage three comprises of a lessening of the inflammatory phase and maintenance of movement restriction. Finally, the movement of the shoulder returns. These phases often last up to two years.

### **Management**

In the early stages of the condition, a clear diagnosis is important. Frozen shoulder often mimics other shoulder conditions. Corticosteroid is often used to control the inflammatory process and allow early return of function. However, the effectiveness of corticosteroid is not as potent later in the condition, and, therefore, early referral is important. Later, once the pain is more controlled, movement, stretching and strengthening exercises are important.

### **Role of Physiotherapy**

A thorough examination is required, as, especially in the early stages of the condition, frozen shoulder mimics other common shoulder conditions. Pain management and gentle movement are the cornerstones of management at this stage. A referral may be necessary to assess for the appropriateness of a cortisone injection. Later, physiotherapy will guide you through correct stretching and strengthening exercises.