

“Doctor – My Shoulder is Frozen”

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The frozen shoulder is a common problem that presents with pain and stiffness. It can be frustrating for the patient and the physician as it can take several months (often 12-18 months) to resolve.

We still don't know the underlying cause of most cases of Frozen Shoulder. The medical term for this condition is adhesive capsulitis which means the shoulder capsule loses its flexibility and becomes stiff.

It is more common in middle age female diabetics but is seen in males also. Various metabolic, endocrine and viral etiologies have been associated and there may be more than 1 cause.

Fortunately it is usually a slowly resolving self limited condition and most patients will recover functional range of motion.

I employ a gentle home therapy program and frequently use a combination of oral steroid medication and a steroid injection. For those who do not improve a manipulation under anesthesia and an aggressive therapy program to maintain range of motion is often used. Having patience and understanding of the natural history of the process helps deal with the frustration by knowing that the majority of patients will recover without complications and usually without surgery.