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Frozen Shoulder (Adhesive Capsulitis) Exercises

Step-by-step exercises to ease shoulder pain and help restore movement

Frozen-Shoulder

For people diagnosed with frozen shoulder. Start with the stage that matches your current pain. Exercise 9 (shoulder blade squeeze) can be done at every stage.

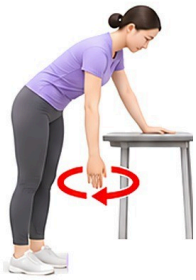
Precautions

- Stay within a comfortable range — a light stretch or mild discomfort is OK.
- If pain clearly increases during or the day after exercise, reduce the reps or range.
- Avoid sudden, forceful stretching.

How often

- Stage 1 (very painful): short and often, several times a day.
- Stage 2 (pain easing): 1–2 times a day.
- Stage 3 (recovering): motion exercises 1–2 times a day; strengthening 2–3 days a week.
- Recovery usually takes several months to 2 years and varies by person.

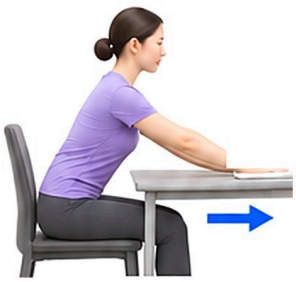
Stage 1 · Very painful — keep gentle movement



1 Pendulum

1. Support yourself on a table or chair and lean forward slightly.
2. Let the sore arm hang relaxed and use your body to swing it in small, slow circles.

10 each direction · 2 sets



2 Table Slide

1. Place a towel on a table and rest both hands on it.
2. Slowly lean forward and gently slide your arms forward.

5–10 reps · 1–2 sets



3 Assisted Arm Raise (Lying)

1. Lie on your back and support the sore arm with your other hand.
2. Slowly raise both arms overhead only as far as is comfortable, then lower.

5–10 reps · 1–2 sets

Stage 2 · Pain easing — restore range of motion



4 External Rotation with a Stick

1. Keep the sore elbow at your side, bent about 90°.
2. Use your other hand to push the stick so the sore arm slowly rotates outward.

5–10 reps · 1–2 sets



5 Wall Walk (Finger Walk)

1. Face a wall and walk your fingers slowly up the wall.
2. Go a little higher over time, only within a pain-free range.

5–10 reps · 1–2 sets



6 Cross-Body Arm Stretch

1. Hold the upper arm (above the elbow) of the sore side with your other hand.
2. Gently pull it across your chest to stretch the back of the shoulder.

Hold 15–30 sec · 2–3 reps

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Stage 3 · Recovering — restore function and strength



7 Towel Stretch Behind the Back

1. Hold a towel behind your back — sore arm below, other arm above.
2. Slowly pull the towel up with the top hand, gently raising the sore arm up your back.

Hold 10–20 sec · 2–3 reps



8 Band External Rotation

1. Keep the sore elbow at your side, bent about 90°.
2. Slowly pull the resistance band outward.
3. Don't let your shoulder shrug up.

8–12 reps · 1–2 sets



9 Shoulder Blade Squeeze

1. Stand tall, relax your shoulders down, and gently squeeze your shoulder blades back together.
2. Open your chest slightly, hold 5 seconds, then slowly relax. (Can be done at every stage.)

Hold 5 sec · 10 reps

Stop and get medical care right away if you notice:

- You cannot lift your arm after a fall
- New numbness, tingling, or weakness in the arm
- Shoulder pain with chest pain or shortness of breath (call 911)
- Fever, or a red and swollen shoulder
- Symptoms that are not improving or are getting worse

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These are simple, comfortable exercises for everyday home use, based on materials from respected medical organizations. For exercises tailored to your symptoms, talk with your healthcare provider. This material does not replace an individual medical evaluation.

Sources: Cambridge University Hospitals NHS – Frozen Shoulder (2024); MedlinePlus – Frozen Shoulder: Aftercare; JOSPT Adhesive Capsulitis Clinical Practice Guideline (2013); AAOS OrthoInfo – Rotator Cuff and Shoulder Conditioning Program. These organizations have not reviewed or endorsed this material. Illustrations created with AI.