

Frozen Shoulder



What is the Frozen Shoulder?

Frozen shoulder (AKA Adhesive Capsulitis) is a condition where the **shoulder joint becomes stiff, painful and difficult to move**. It happens when the tissue that surrounds the shoulder joint (The joint capsule) becomes inflamed, thickened and tight, limiting movement.

👉 In simple terms: **The shoulder ‘freezes up’, making everyday movements painful and restricted.**

Why do Frozen Shoulders happen?

The exact cause isn't always clear, but frozen shoulder usually develops after the shoulder has been less active for a period of time.

Common risk factors include:

- Previous shoulder injury or surgery
- Prolonged immobilisation (E.g. Being in a sling)
- Diabetes
- Thyroid conditions
- Heart or chest surgery
- Stroke
- Age 40-60
- More common in women

Stages of Frozen Shoulder

Frozen shoulder typically progresses through three stages, each with different symptoms:

1. Freezing Stage (Painful Stage)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Increasing shoulder pain● Pain at rest and at night	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Gradual loss of movement● Lasts: 2-9 months
2. Frozen Stage (Stiff Stage)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Pain may reduce● Severe stiff remains	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Difficulty with daily tasks (Dressing, reaching)● Lasts 4-12 months
3. Thawing Stage (Recovery Stage)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Gradual return of movement● Pain continues to improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Strength and function return● Lasts: 6-24 months

How can physiotherapy help?

Physiotherapy plays a key role in reducing pain, restoring movement and helping you return to normal daily activities when you have a frozen shoulder. Treatment is tailored to your stage of recovery and symptoms.

During the early ‘freezing’ stage, pain is often the main problem so treatment focuses on reducing joint/muscle tension, maintaining range of motion and improving comfort. This can be achieved through gentle hands-on techniques, soft tissue releases, heat/ice, activity modification and targeted exercises.

As stiffness develops during stage 2 and movement becomes restricted, physiotherapy focuses on gently stretching the joint capsule, improving joint mobility, and preventing further loss of movement.

During the thawing stage, we can focus on your recovery. Patients progress to advanced mobility work, strength training, functional exercises and return-to-work/sports programs.

If you have just developed symptoms in your shoulder and are concerned about whether you have a frozen shoulder, contact us straight away. If we can identify frozen shoulder early enough, there are new preventative treatments that can prevent the shoulder from freezing in the first place, saving you what is often 2 years of recovery.

If you are developing pain or stiffness, don't wait for your symptoms to worsen. Contact the team here at Emu Physio or book online today. Your shoulder deserves expert care - Let us help you get moving again.