

## **Frozen Shoulder**

### **remedial and preventative exercises for frozen shoulder**

Anyone who has had a frozen shoulder knows how painful it can be; and fixing it isn't easy. The problem is the location of the injury which is in the rotator cup, that part where the joint sits and swivels. Being right inside, the usual liniments and creams applied to the skin covering the shoulder joint rarely work because they can't penetrate deeply enough. Although painful to receive, a steroid injection right into the inflamed region does relieve the discomfort and permits limited movement. Oral pain killers also have some effect; but, like the jab, they are a temporary fix and will not repair the damage.

When I managed to injure my shoulder, I eventually agreed to have the injection; then I was able to try some of the remedial exercises recommended by a physiotherapist. His advice was: start slowly and simply; only attempt the exercises that you are capable of without causing pain; and build up the repetitions gradually over time. So, I took his advice and, by doing the exercises every day, eventually fixed my frozen shoulder. As it happened, a short time later I damaged the other shoulder; but by then I knew what worked and sorted it out myself – much to the disappointment of my doctor who seems to enjoy sticking needles in people!

Following is a series of exercises borrowed from Healthy Living HL10. These are the main ones I use daily; and I like to think because I rarely miss a day, that my frozen shoulders are things of the past. They work for me; and they may work for you; BUT, first check with your doctor before beginning them.

No expensive equipment is necessary. For many of the exercises I use a walking stick, but any smooth pole about a metre long will do. If you stand in front of a mirror while exercising, you can check posture to restrict movement to the upper body, keeping the lower part as static as possible.

**FOR EACH EXERCISE - START WITH FIVE REPETITIONS (LESS IF TOO HARD)  
INCREASING GRADUALLY OVER TIME UP TO A MAXIMUM OF TWENTY A DAY**

**With any exercise, forget “no pain, no gain” – if it hurts, back off a bit.**

This first set of exercises can be done standing, sitting, or lying down. The idea is to exert pressure to tense the muscles, then release. The harder you push, the better the final result, but take it easy to start with. On the last push of each set, whether you are doing five or twenty, hold the pressure and your breath as you count the number of repetitions you have done. Breathe normally if you start to feel uncomfortable or dizzy.

## Hand Presses



1. With hands in front of the torso, place the finger-tips together pointing out, palms apart as if holding a baseball between them. Keep them this way while pushing fingers together as if trying to squash the imaginary ball. You will feel tendons in the hands straining, plus arm and chest muscles tightening. Hold the pressure and count one, then release. Push again and count two, etc. Repeat each push five times, breathing in deeply as you push, exhaling as you release.

The following variations are performed the same way, but with the hands in different positions:



2. Keeping elbows bent with forearms extended in front, turn the wrists until the fingers are pointing at the ground and lower the hands to about waist height.



3. Elbows still bent, swivel the hands so the finger-tips are pointing at the ceiling and bring up until they are in front of the face.



4. Keeping fingers together and palms apart, extend directly in front of the chest so that the arms are at full stretch.

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5. With arms still straight, drop the hands to their lowest point, fingers pointing at the floor, elbows and upper arms just touching the body - try to keep the shoulders back.



6. Finally, stretch the arms with hands as high as they will go above the head. This is probably the most uncomfortable of the "squeeze-type" exercises, but it's the last one of this set, so you can breathe a huge sigh when you are done.

### **Wall Exercises (standing) - Standing Push-ups**



With feet slightly astride, position yourself facing a wall and just over an arm's length from it. Extend the arms to full-stretch, hands spread, now lean forward until palms are resting flat on the vertical surface.



Keeping feet planted and the back straight, bend the elbows until the forehead almost touches the wall. Then, straighten arms to return to the start position and count one. Breathe in as you bend the arms and exhale as you straighten them. Repeat five times, or as many as you can without pain.

### Side pushes.

You'll need two walls meeting at right angles, same as an outside corner of a box. Or you can stand in a doorway facing the wall where the door latches. If you feel the need for some padding on the hand, wrap a towel around, or try a thick oven-mitt.



**Left hand (palm).** Stand close to and facing the flat section of one wall, with the left foot in line with the return wall. With feet astride, elbow bent and the arm extended out in front of the body, place the left palm on the flat of the return. Now push the palm against it with sufficient force to just take your weight off the right foot. Count one and release. Breathe deeply as before. Try five repetitions to begin with.



**Left hand (back).** Keeping the left foot on the same spot, swivel on it in a clockwise direction through ninety degrees so that you are side-on to the wall you were previously facing. With the arm in the bent position, place the back of your hand against the wall and push outward until you feel your upper body trying to move away.

Repeat both side-pushes for the right hand, reversing your position as necessary.

### Stick exercises - standing.

This set is predominantly for the shoulders, but will also impact muscles and tendons in the arms, back, chest and neck. I use a walking stick, but any pole of a similar length will do, even a golf club. If you can, stand in front of a mirror. This is so that you can watch your actions to make sure the body and head don't move around too much.

1. Standing with feet together, grasp the stick near the ends and hold it horizontally in front of the body at its lowest point, palms facing behind, arms straight.

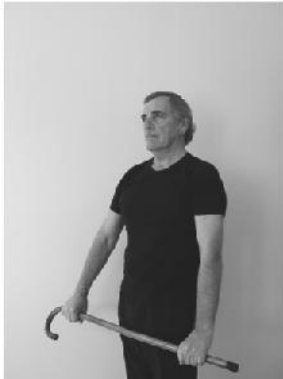


Now, bend the elbows, drawing the stick up close to the body towards the chest while keeping the wrists locked, just like lifting a bar-bell without the weight. Go up as far as you can until the tension starts to feel uncomfortable, then lower. Watch yourself and avoid tipping your head forward. Repeat four more times.

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2. With the stick at its lowest point, keep the arms straight and swing out in front of your body and up until you are stretching as high as you can go, then reverse the swing. This one is great practice for the Mexican Wave! Repeat all exercises for five repetitions.



3. With the stick down low, turn the right hand and grip with the palm facing forward - leave the left hand as it is. Now, keeping the stick and left arm close, push across the body, swinging the right hand sideways and up until it is high above your head (a bit like an ordinary wave). Return to the low point for a count of one. Reverse the procedure to exercise the left shoulder.



4. Transfer the stick behind you and grip just outside the hips with palms facing back. Bend at the elbows to raise the stick close to the body and as high as you can.

Try not to lean backwards.



5. With the stick still behind and in the low position, keep arms straight and swing out and back as far as you can. Avoid leaning forwards.



6. No illustrations for this one, but try thinking about it like a backward shrug. Holding the stick behind the back, with arms straight and hands down. Rotate shoulders back, trying to revolve the shoulder blades first outward, then together. Relax and repeat.

7. While the hands are behind the back, arms straight and hands down, turn the left palm to face forwards. Now swing the stick towards the left, trying to bring the back of the right hand up to touch the left shoulder blade. Do the five repetitions, then reverse the procedure for the swing to the right.

Don't worry if you can't get close to begin with. Movement will improve over time.

When I first started these exercises, shoulder movement was severely restricted and generally painful. Back then, I couldn't get my hand far enough behind my back to tie an apron string. Now I can touch the middle of my shoulder blade, and I can play a few holes of golf without physical pain.

### **Please Note:**

When doing any exercise no matter how simple, be mindful of what your body is telling you. Pain and discomfort are warnings that should not be ignored. Nerve and muscle twinges, or the clicking of joints are often signs that there is either an existing problem, or the actions necessary to perform a particular exercise need adjusting. If you have been told by a medical practitioner to avoid certain movements or activities, heed the advice. Like us, they are only trying to keep you fit and healthy.

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