

Arthroscopic Capsular Release

What is a frozen shoulder?

A frozen shoulder occurs when the ligaments and joint capsule around your shoulder become thickened and tight. As these ligaments thicken and tighten, patients will experience pain and severe restriction in shoulder motion. This condition can occur after injuries to the shoulder or without any direct cause; however, certain medical conditions like diabetes and thyroid disease can increase a person's risk of developing a frozen shoulder.

How do you treat frozen shoulders?

A frozen shoulder can be treated without surgery in most patients. Conservative management includes anti-inflammatory medications, anti-inflammatory steroid injections in the shoulder, and physical therapy to work on regaining motion. For most patients, a frozen shoulder begins to be less painful and less stiff with time but can sometimes take up to a year or longer.

When these conservative measures fail to significantly improve pain or motion then surgery may be recommended. The surgery is arthroscopic, meaning a small camera is inserted into your shoulder and the thickened capsule and ligaments are released around the shoulder through multiple small incisions. This is termed a capsular release or lysis of adhesions. Occasionally, a manipulation of the shoulder is also done to gently improve your shoulder motion after the capsule has been released.

Surgery Information

Length of Stay

This is a same-day procedure – meaning once the surgery is done and you have recovered in our recovery unit (PACU) then you will go home. You will need someone available to stay in the facility during the day of your surgery and drive you home afterwards.

Anesthesia

You will typically receive two types of anesthesia for this surgery.

- General anesthesia: meaning you are asleep during the procedure
- Nerve Block: the anesthesiologist will place medicine around the nerves that go to your arm. This will cause the arm to feel numb and not move. This block is very helpful for pain control after surgery and will last for about 12-24 hours.

Incisions and Dressings

You will have multiple small incisions around your shoulder closed with nylon suture (black suture) which will be removed as your first visit 2 weeks after surgery.

Your shoulder will be covered with a combination of gauze and tape. After three days you may remove this tape and gauze. At this point you can shower, letting soap and water run over the

wound, patting them dry afterwards. You do not need to place a new dressing over top of the stitches, unless you would like to. Sometimes the stitches may snag on shirts, so you may find it more comfortable to place band-aids over the stitches to prevent this.

When showering, do not scrub the incision or dressings, just allow soap and water to run over the dressing/incision. Please do not submerge your incision under water for 4 weeks after surgery – no swimming pools, hot tubs, or baths. Do not apply any oils, ointments, or lotions to your incision or around your incisions.

Sling

When you wake up from surgery, a sling will be on your arm. **You must remove your arm from the sling once your block wears off (one day after surgery).** It is critical that you begin moving and stretching your shoulder early and often after this procedure to help regain motion quickly. While staying in a sling for longer may be more comfortable, it will slow down how quickly and how much motion your shoulder regains.

Pain Control

The first week or two is typically the worst. The swelling in your shoulder and hand is completely normal and will go away within the first week. Here are some helpful tips for pain control:

- Review my “Post-operative medication” information sheet I provided or on my website. I prescribe many different medications after surgery to help control your pain in different ways.
- Heat: I recommend heating your shoulder prior to any stretching exercises and then icing after your stretches are done.
- Ice: I strongly recommend ice after surgery. This will help with the pain and swelling after surgery. Apply for 20 minutes on and then 20 minutes off, repeat as needed. Ice-packs work just as well as an ice machine – and are significantly cheaper; however, many patients find the ice machine to be less hassle. Amazon and some medical supply stores supply these ice machines.

Post-operative Appointment

I will see you at roughly the following intervals after surgery: 2 weeks, 6 weeks, and 3 months.

After your surgery, if you do not have a first post-operative visit appointment please call our office so we can schedule to see 2 weeks after surgery.

For any concerns, please contact my office

Please call my office if you begin to experience any of the following after surgery:

- Fever above 101.5 F
- Loss of motion or new onset numbness after surgery (your nerve block will be in place for approximately 24 hours after surgery)
- Excessive bleeding that is saturating the bandages

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- Increased pain, increased redness around the incision, purulent drainage (thick, white drainage with a foul odor), or persistent drainage > 4 days.

Post-operative Rehab and Restrictions

Physical Therapy or Home Therapy

You will be given a physical therapy prescription **before your surgery**. It is very important to schedule physical therapy to **start the day after surgery**. If you are unable to go to physical therapy, then home therapy exercises can be provided. These must be done multiple times daily for at least 3 months.

Restrictions after surgery

- Sling:
 - Wear for 24 hours and then **remove your sling**.
- Motion restrictions:
 - None: start therapy the day after surgery and begin daily stretches for your shoulder
- Strengthening and weightlifting:
 - While there are no specific restrictions on strengthening or how much weight you can lift, **your primary focus after surgery is regaining motion**. Emphasis should be placed on stretching and not lifting or strengthening.
- Return to work:
 - You may return to work when you are ready. For patients with a desk job this may be in the first week or two after surgery. For patients with more heavy lifting or demanding jobs, 6 weeks may be a more realistic goal to returning with restrictions at work.

Helpful resources during your recovery



Post-op Button or Magnetic shirts

You can find these shirts on amazon by searching “Post-op shoulder surgery shirts”. They have magnetic or button options that make it very easy to change your shirt without taking your sling off. They are typically

~\$15 per shirt.



Ice Machine

While ice packs are cheap and just as effective, many patients like to use ice machines after shoulder surgery as they are less hassle. These machines can be found in medical supply stores, but Amazon will sell these for much cheaper (~\$100). Search “ice machine for shoulder surgery” to find multiple options.



Door Pulley

A door pulley is a very helpful way to work on range of motion exercises for your shoulder. Using the non-operative arm you can raise your operative arm without any effort (passive) or with some effort from your operative arm (active-assist). You can find these on Amazon by searching "Door Pulley for Shoulder Therapy".