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Adhesive Capsulitis

As we have discussed, I feel that the cause of your pain is a condition called Adhesive Capsulitis or "Frozen Shoulder". This is a common problem that affects thousands of people every year.

We do not know the cause of frozen shoulder.

It does not seem to result from an injury. While **some people relate the onset of their pain to an injury or illness**, many more say the problem began "out of the blue", without any cause.

Pain may start suddenly or begin slowly, Pain and stiffness in the shoulder increase. Often patients report difficulty with sleeping, as the shoulder is particularly painful at night. Reaching up to get items off shelves, reaching behind the back to tuck in a shirt or blouse becomes difficult or impossible. Jerky movements of the shoulder cause very sharp pain.

Adhesive capsulitis is not a disease of aging. Most patients are between the ages of 40 and 60. The condition does not increase as you get older. Like any condition it has a beginning, middle and an end. You know the beginning. The middle of the condition occurs as the pain decreases but the stiffness remains and ends as the stiffness resolves.

Why does adhesive capsulitis occur?

Medical science has not found a cause of this process. We know what happens, but not why. Normally the shoulder joint ligaments are folded, like the folds of curtain or fan. When the arm moves upward, the folds expand. When the arm is lowered the folds contract. In frozen shoulder the folds stick to one another, and are inflamed. The inflammation causes intense pain and the resulting scar tissue then gives stiffness.

The good news: Most individuals regain excellent use of their shoulder with no or minimal discomfort.

The bad news is that this process of healing and recovery can take **1-2 years**

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What can be done?

Regrettably we have no proven method to speed the natural healing process, the shoulder recovers in time.

Anti- inflammatories and cortisone injection may help some of the pain. Physiotherapy plays a major role, coupled with a specific exercise program including gentle stretches of the shoulder joint which will encourage the return of motion, as well as muscle strengthening exercises which will help you maintain tone so that when your shoulder motion recovers, the muscles are strong.

Swimming regularly, particularly breaststroke can be helpful.

Don't be afraid to use your shoulder for any and all activities as it is important to try and maintain the movement you have. It is however important to try and avoid working with too much pain.

I know that it is a frustrating condition. Hopefully now that you know why your shoulder is painful and understand what will happen and what you can do about it, you will feel more at ease.

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