

# 7 stretching & strengthening exercises for a frozen shoulder

**Frozen shoulder** (also known as adhesive capsulitis) is a condition in which the shoulder is stiff, painful, and has limited motion in all directions.

Stretching exercises are usually the cornerstone of treating frozen shoulder.

Always warm up your shoulder before performing your exercises. The best way to do that is to take a warm shower or bath for 10 to 15 minutes. You can also use a moist heating pad or damp towel heated in the microwave, but it may not be as effective.

In performing the following exercises, stretch to the point of tension but not pain.

## 1. Pendulum stretch



Do this exercise first. Relax your shoulders. Stand and lean over slightly, allowing the affected arm to hang down. Swing the arm in a small circle — about a foot in diameter. Perform 10 revolutions in each direction, once a day. As your symptoms improve, increase the diameter of your swing, but never force it. When you're ready for more, increase the stretch by holding a light weight (three to five pounds) in the swinging arm.

## 2. Towel stretch



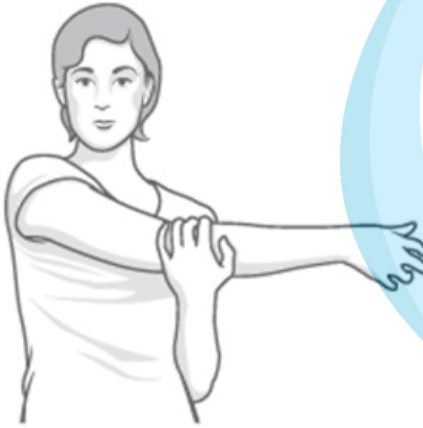
Hold one end of a three-foot-long towel behind your back and grab the opposite end with your other hand. Hold the towel in a horizontal position. Use your good arm to pull the affected arm upward to stretch it. You can also do an advanced version of this exercise with the towel draped over your good shoulder. Hold the bottom of the towel with the affected arm and pull it toward the lower back with the unaffected arm. Do this 10 to 20 times a day.

## 3. Finger walk



Face a wall three-quarters of an arm's length away. Reach out and touch the wall at waist level with the fingertips of the affected arm. With your elbow slightly bent, slowly walk your fingers up the wall, spider-like, until you've raised your arm as far as you comfortably can. Your fingers should be doing the work, not your shoulder muscles. Slowly lower the arm (with the help of the good arm, if necessary) and repeat. Perform this exercise 10 to 20 times a day.

#### 4. Cross-body reach



Sit or stand. Use your good arm to lift your affected arm at the elbow, and bring it up and across your body, exerting gentle pressure to stretch the shoulder. Hold the stretch for 15 to 20 seconds. Do this 10 to 20 times per day.

#### 5. Armpit stretch



Using your good arm, lift the affected arm onto a shelf about breast-high. Gently bend your knees, opening up the armpit. Deepen your knee bend slightly, gently stretching the armpit, and then straighten. With each knee bend, stretch a little further, but don't force it. Do this 10 to 20 times each day.

#### Starting to strengthen

As your range of motion improves, add rotator cuff-strengthening exercises. Be sure to warm up your shoulder and do your stretching exercises before you perform strengthening exercises.

## 6. Outward rotation



Hold a rubber exercise band between your hands with your elbows at a 90-degree angle close to your sides. Rotate the lower part of the affected arm outward two or three inches and hold for five seconds. Repeat 10 to 15 times, once a day.

## 7. Inward rotation



Stand next to a closed door, and hook one end of a rubber exercise band around the doorknob. Hold the other end with the hand of the affected arm, holding your elbow at a 90-degree angle. Pull the band toward your body two or three inches and hold for five seconds. Repeat 10 to 15 times, once a day.

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