

Is Frozen Shoulder Cool, or What?

Frozen shoulder is definitely not "cool" nor does it have anything to do with cold.

It is a real pain in the.... well, shoulder.

It is very painful and causes a lot of stiffness in the shoulder. It can seem to start suddenly, almost overnight, but really it comes on gradually and mildly and then seems to grab you.

The cause is inflammation and little wear and tear changes in the rotator cuff and layers of tissue in the shoulder. These parts are supposed to smoothly glide over each other, but if they get red and inflamed and stick together, look out! Pain, ouch.

Then, naturally the person stops using the arm and shoulder because it hurts and they may even get a sling to wear. It may help the pain, but it is the wrong thing to do as the shoulder only gets stiffer.

By the time the person comes to see me a few weeks may have passed.

Patients with diabetes have to be extra careful, because they have a much higher chance of getting this for some reason. Injury or over use rarely seems to be the cause.

Plain x-rays may be (usually are) entirely normal and even an MRI might not show much wrong.

As with most conditions, early treatment is the key. Initial treatment often includes prescription anti-inflammatory medication, Theragesic rub, heat/ice and home exercises to loosen the shoulder.

More advanced treatment could be outpatient Physical Therapy and injection with a cortisone type anti-inflammatory medication.

In more severe cases many patients have been treated with exam of the shoulder under anesthesia to gently separate some of the adhesions and to get the shoulder moving with Physical Therapy and lots of home exercises.

Occasionally arthroscopic surgery needs to be combined with exam under anesthesia to treat the shoulder.

We see a lot of these kinds of shoulder problems, unfortunately.

Early treatment can be extremely helpful.

We do know more than just the shoulder, but the shoulder is a large subject that we'd like to cover before going onto many other things so stay tuned!

Shoulder problems or any other Orthopaedic Surgery conditions can be evaluated by Dr. Haverbush at Lakeview Community Wellness Center. Clinic dates are March 21, April 4, and April 18, 2008. Call 989-463-6092 for an appointment.