

Physiotherapy Department

Stiff Shoulder Advice and Exercises

The shoulder can stiffen up for a number of reasons such as:

- As a result of an injury such as a fracture
- Underlying degenerative condition such as osteoarthritis
- Developing a capsulitis or “frozen shoulder”

How can you help?

The most effective way to improve stiffness in your shoulder is to keep your pain levels controlled and do regular exercise to regain flexibility and movement.

Pain control

If the pain bothers you and especially if it affects your sleep, try some simple measures to control the pain such as:

- **Medication**

Please consult your pharmacist or GP for advice on the best pain relief for you.

- **Use of Heat and Ice**

Please be aware that if you have circulatory problems, poor skin sensation or if you have diabetic neuropathy, please do not apply heat or cold to the affected area. Please seek medical advice if you feel at all unsure or have any questions.

Heat

The use of heat can help with pain and muscle relaxation. To protect your skin from heat burns, wrap the item in a (few layers of) towel. Leave in place for 10-15 minutes. It can be reapplied after 2 hours if you wish.

Examples of heat application:

- Warm shower or bath
- Bowl of warm water (for hands and feet)
- Hot water bottle (do not use boiling water)
- Wheat bag (heat in microwave to comfortable temperature before use)
- Heat pad
 - Do not sit next to a fire to warm the area.
 - Heat packs should not be used on a joint or area of skin that is very inflamed or in the first 48-72 hours after an injury.
 - It is normal for the skin to become pink with either heat or ice, however, if you experience discomfort or a burning sensation remove the item immediately.
 - If pain troubles you at night, try resting your arm on a pillow.

Cold

The use of ice can help with pain and inflammation. To protect the skin from an ice burn, place the ice pack in a wet towel. Leave in place for 10-15 minutes. It can be reapplied after 2 hours if you wish.

Examples of cold application:

- Bowl of cold water (for hands or feet)
- Cold, damp towel or flannel
- Bag of frozen peas
- Frozen gel pack or wheat bag
- For a small area of your body (e.g. fingers, thumb or toe) wrap an ice cube in a cloth and massage it over the area until it melts (5-10 minutes)

Contrast Bathing

Using heat and cold together can help (may be useful to) reduce pain and inflammation.

1. Place heat on the affected area (under heat) or place in warm water for 1 minute
2. Then place cold on the affected area (under cold) or place in cold water for 2 minutes
3. Repeat this process 5 times, for a total of 15 minutes
4. Always finish in cold water and then dry the area thoroughly

Please note: It is normal for the skin to become pink with either heat or ice, however, if you experience discomfort or a burning sensation remove the item immediately.

Exercises for restricted movement

For any shoulder stiffness, exercises will help to increase the circulation to the area, mobilise scar tissue and help you to obtain the best possible function. If pain is an issue, stretch up to the threshold of pain and use controlled rather than rapid movements. If you are taking pain relief wait until it has taken effect before exercising. Use heat or ice afterwards if aching persists.

There is no point in forcing movements through pain as it will not be effective and will only increase pain severity and make it harder to repeat the exercise later. If you do overdo it, don't be anxious. Use your pain control then resume the exercises more gently.

Please see below for examples of effective exercises for a stiff shoulder:



Lie on your back, holding a pole in both hands.

Raise both hands overhead until you feel a stretch.

Hold this stretch for 15-30 seconds

10 repetitions twice a day



Sit at a table.

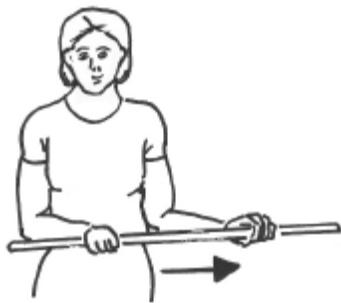
Start and finish the exercise with an upright posture.

Place both hands on a towel and slide the towel away from you.

Hold this stretch for 15-30 seconds

10 repetitions twice a day

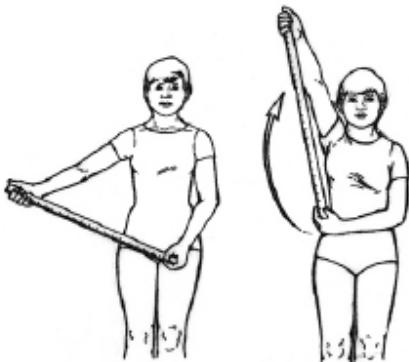




Stand with your elbows bent to 90° and hold a pole in front. Keep your elbows still and push your affected arm away from your body so the arm rotates. You can put a rolled up hand towel under your armpit to reduce cheating movements.

Hold this stretch for 15-30 seconds.

10 repetitions twice a day.



Stand hold a stick and push your affected arm sideways upwards until you feel a stretch.

Hold this stretch for 15-30 seconds.

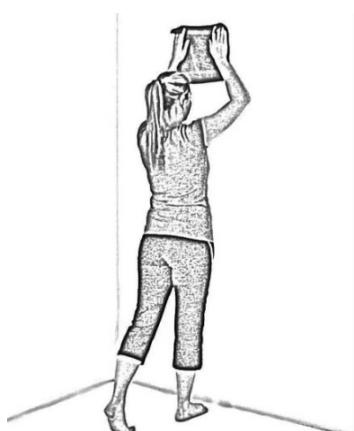
10 repetitions twice a day.



Try to reach your hands up behind your back.

Hold this stretch for 15-30 seconds.

5 repetitions twice a day.



Place your hands shoulder width apart on a towel on the wall in front of you.

Slide your hands up the wall until you feel a gentle stretch.

Hold this stretch for 15-30 seconds.

10 repetitions twice a day.



Stand with affected arm against the wall.

Push your wrist outward while keeping the elbow at your side.

Hold for 10 seconds.

You can use the opposite arm to resist movement at wrist level instead of pushing against the wall.

5 repetitions twice a day.

Web Address

<http://www.cht.nhs.uk/services/clinical-services/physiotherapy-outpatients/patient-careinformation/>

QR Code



If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

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Telephone No: 01484 342434

MSK Physiotherapy Admin Office
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www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

کوئی مسیو ایک سائنساٹیو ہیسمی ہوئے پاکٹپ سان ٹائمسا ہینچ لائنا چاہوئے ہے،
تو ہی پاکٹپا ہر کوئی ٹیپکٹیو ہینچ سائنسا ہیں جو ناچل سپر کر جائے۔

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ ٹیزبان میں درکار ہوں، تو
برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں سے رابطہ کریں۔

"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغایر أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم المذكور أعلاه"