

Adhesive Capsulitis Protocol

Adhesive capsulitis (commonly referred to as “frozen shoulder”) is a condition in which the shoulder capsule becomes thickened and scarred, resulting in painful stiffness. It usually resolves with time, but may be accelerated by gentle passive stretching. A home exercise program is vital for these patients as well.

Goal: Restore normal ROM

1. Develop Home Exercise Program

- Self-stretches through low-load prolonged stretch
- Cane and/or pulley activities
- Distal joint ROM (elbow and wrist flexion and extension)
- Stretching regimen should be performed two to three times daily

2. Land Therapy (1-2x/wk)

- Hot pack prior to mobilization
- Grade II-III joint mobilization
- Gentle PROM with low-load prolonged stretch within pain-free tolerance
- Peri-scapular strengthening

3. Aquatic Therapy (1x/wk based on patient preference and pool availability)

- Deep water exercises: i.e. cycling, jogging
- Shallow water exercises: i.e. Upper extremity ROM
- Self-stretch utilizing the water’s buoyancy