

Frozen Shoulder: Stage and Movement Sheet

The 3 stages and how long each lasts, the resting mistake that stretches it out, and what treatment actually works.

✓ **Verified against published guidance** from Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic & Johns Hopkins Medicine · sources below

A shoulder that stops moving after an injury, or one that is stiff and painful with no injury at all, deserves a proper exam. Do not self diagnose a tear.

✓ Do This

Name Your Stage First

- Freezing: painful, range shrinking
- Thawing: motion slowly returning
- Frozen: stiff, pain easing

COACH'S TIP The stage decides what actually helps.

Get a Physical Therapy Referral Early

- Start soon after a painful injury
- Early beats aggressive every time
- Cleveland ties prevention to early therapy

COACH'S TIP Early is a program. Late is a salvage job.

Do the Home Stretches Daily

- A cane, a pulley or an elastic cord
- Graded, not forced
- Once or twice a day

COACH'S TIP Small and daily beats hard and occasional.

Keep Using the Arm Within Comfort

- Lack of use thickens the capsule
- Gentle range beats total rest
- Less motion means less motion

COACH'S TIP Protecting it is what tightens it.

Ask About Injections and Medication

- Anti inflammatories for pain
- Pain control makes therapy possible
- Steroid injection in some cases

COACH'S TIP Less pain means more of the stretching gets done.

Check the Conditions Behind It

- Diabetes and thyroid disease
- Ask if yours is being managed
- Heart disease, stroke, Parkinson's

COACH'S TIP The systemic driver is often the real story.

✗ Do Not

Do Not Assume It Is a Rotator Cuff Tear

- Frozen shoulder limits passive range too
- A tear usually leaves passive range
- An X-ray helps rule out other causes

COACH'S TIP Passive range is the distinguishing test.

Do Not Force the Range

- Hopkins describes a graded program
- Progress is measured in months
- Brute force in the painful stage backfires

COACH'S TIP Aggressive stretching makes it angrier.

Do Not Rest It Completely

- Immobility is a top listed cause
- Post surgery is the classic trap
- Slings and wraps raise the risk

COACH'S TIP Rest is the mistake that costs months.

Do Not Expect a Fast Fix

- Freezing runs 2 to 9 months
- Thawing runs 5 to 24 months
- Frozen runs 4 to 12 months

COACH'S TIP Knowing the shape of it prevents panic.

Do Not Reach for Surgery First

- Mayo calls surgery rare
- Motion and pain are the deciding measures
- It follows failed non operative care

COACH'S TIP Surgery is the last door, not the first.

Do Not Load It With Weight Alone

- A therapist sets the progression
- Range comes before resistance
- Loading a stiff joint sets you back

COACH'S TIP Get taught before you get ambitious.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THIS SHEET

Three figures worth knowing

1 to 3 years the typical span from first symptom to recovery

3 stages freezing, frozen and thawing, always in that order

10% to 20% of people with diabetes develop frozen shoulder