

Lakeview Community Wellness Center Orthopaedic Connection

Wintertime. Frozen Shoulder Anyone?

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Frozen shoulder definitely happens all year round not just in the winter.

Funny name. What is it?

A very painful condition that causes a lot of stiffness in the shoulder. If you are having pain in the shoulder and have trouble lifting your arm above your head you may have it. Trouble reaching across your body or behind you is common.

Who gets it?

Sorry ladies, but it affects more of you than men. Comes on between age 40 - 65. Affects 20% of diabetics. Other causes are a period of restricted use of the arm, heart disease, depression, and Parkinson's disease.

Why do you get it?

No one knows for sure. It probably involves an underlying inflammatory process. The capsule tissue around the shoulder joint thickens and tightens. The tissues are supposed to smoothly glide over each other, but if they get red, inflamed and stick together, look out. Pain, ouch, welcome to frozen shoulder!

Then what?

Well, naturally the person stops using the arm and shoulder because it hurts. A "friend" says to use a sling. Terrible idea. Worst thing you can do. It may help the pain a little, but the shoulder only gets stiffer.

Other ways it presents

It can also come on slowly in stages over months.
Pain with movement often worse at night.
Pain may begin to decrease, but so does motion.

The condition might resolve over several months, but more commonly stays and you end up with a painful shoulder that won't move.

How I diagnose it?

First of all I wish you had called me early as I would have got you right in and diagnosed the problem. Don't wait. You make it harder on you and me the longer it goes. Earlier is better.

Like everything else I see.

Good history

Careful exam

Plain x-rays

MRI - maybe but always plain x-rays first. Always.

How I treat it

Treatment is geared to relieving pain and restoring motion and function to the shoulder.

Medication includes Advil or similar to fight inflammation and pain

Muscle relaxant like Flexeril

Heat and ice (sound familiar?)

Theragesic rub (or similar)

Physical therapy program combined with home exercises to stretch and restore motion and comfort

Maybe a corticosteroid injection

The majority of patients will improve with the steps listed above. They have served my patients well. But a few of you still refuse to get better. Dang. Now what?

EUA, what's that?

Well, when I am sure you have frozen shoulder or as we call it medically adhesive capsulitis, I may suggest EUA. But I have to be completely sure you don't have true arthritis or a tear of the rotator cuff.

Anyway, EUA stands for exam under anesthesia. I arrange the procedure as an outpatient at Gratiot Medical Center. It is done in the operating room because you need an anesthetic.

No cutting is done. I gently take your shoulder through a range of motion and adhesions separate. I inject the shoulder with a pain reliever and you go to the recovery room, back then to day surgery and then home. Pain pill, muscle relaxant and ice.

Follow up

Most of my patients have Physical Therapy for a time after EUA. Not all need it, however.

Grateful Patients

I can say definitely that patients who have had EUA are among the most grateful I have. It makes them and me very happy.

Once in awhile someone will need arthroscopic surgery to release adhesions and repair the shoulder, but in my experience this is fairly rare.

Well, there you have it. Out of time this week. Hope this information is helpful to you. Remember, early treatment is the key.

Thanks for your support at Lakeview Community Wellness Center. I am happy to see all Orthopaedic Surgery problems at LCWC or at the office, 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan. Please call 989-463-6092 to schedule an appointment at either place.

Future LCWC Clinic dates are March 5 and March 19, 2010.

Log on to www.orthopodsurgeon.com, which can take you to Your Orthopaedic Connection for answers to all your questions.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush