

Acupuncture for the Treatment of Frozen Shoulder

BY CORINNA MCFARLANE, D.TCM, D.O.M., NCCAOM
JEFF MCMACKIN, D.TCM, D.AC., D.C.H.

The term "frozen shoulder" is used to describe a variety of conditions that cause pain and limit the range of motion of the shoulder joint. Most commonly caused by inflammation of the synovial tissue or thickening of synovial fluid, frozen shoulder occurs mainly in middle-aged people who have a history of shoulder injuries.

In some cases, the pain associated with frozen shoulder can be severe enough to disturb a person's sleep; in others, patients cannot rotate the shoulder properly and have difficulty moving the affected arm.

Treatment of frozen shoulder aims to reduce inflammation and increase range of motion. Traditionally this is achieved with anti-inflammatory drugs, ultrasound, and application of heat, massage, and stretching. Nerve blocks and steroid injections have also been employed at times, with varying degrees of effectiveness.

Acupuncture is another form of treatment, which has been shown to effectively treat frozen shoulder because of its ability to:

- Reduce inflammation
- Promote the release of endorphins, your body's natural pain killers
- Release trigger points and relieve muscle spasm
- Increase range of motion

A new study, published in the Hong Kong Medical Journal, found that patients treated with acupuncture (twice a week for six weeks) and physiotherapy exercise demonstrated "significantly greater improvement" on shoulder assessment tests than those using just exercise.

In addition to acupuncture, a Chinese Medicine practitioner may also combine the use of electro acupuncture, moxabustion, fire cupping, or gua sha (skin scraping) into a treatment protocol. Chinese herbal medicine may also be prescribed.

Clinical studies show that conventional and complimentary medicines can work side by side to produce a superior therapeutic effect than either one can by itself.

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