

Winston Salem Shoulder

Dr. S. Bradley Winter, MD • OrthoCarolina

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Frozen Shoulder (Adhesive Capsulitis) — Rehabilitation Protocol

Conservative & Post-Manipulation / Arthroscopic Capsular Release • Dr. S. Bradley Winter, MD

PHASE 1: FREEZING PHASE / ACUTE POST-OP | Weeks 0–4

GOALS

- Reduce pain
- Minimize further stiffness
- Restore early motion

EXERCISES / ACTIVITIES

- Cryotherapy / heat alternation
- Gentle pendulums
- PROM within pain tolerance
- Sleeper stretch
- Distraction mobilizations (PT)

PRECAUTIONS

- Avoid aggressive stretching in acute freezing phase
- Post-op: aggressive motion is appropriate and expected

PHASE 2: THAWING / MOBILITY PHASE | Weeks 4–12

GOALS

- Progressive ROM in all planes
- Full passive motion
- Reduce capsular tightness

EXERCISES / ACTIVITIES

- PROM and AAROM forward flexion, ER, IR
- Inferior glide mobilizations
- Capsular stretching
- Overhead pulleys
- Active-assisted exercises

PRECAUTIONS

- Pain is expected but should not be severe
- Communicate pain levels with PT

PHASE 3: ACTIVE MOTION & STRENGTHENING | Weeks 10–20

GOALS

- Full active ROM
- Rotator cuff activation
- Functional strength

EXERCISES / ACTIVITIES

- AROM in all planes
- Theraband IR/ER
- Scapular stability
- Overhead reaching
- Functional ADL integration

PRECAUTIONS

- Progress at individual patient pace — frozen shoulder resolves differently for each patient

PHASE 4: RETURN TO FULL FUNCTION | Months 4–18

GOALS

- Full functional return
- Independent home program
- Activity resumption

EXERCISES / ACTIVITIES

- Progressive resistance training
- Sport or work-specific activity
- Maintenance stretching program

PRECAUTIONS

- Natural course of frozen shoulder can take 12–18 months without intervention
- Surgical release significantly accelerates recovery

This protocol is a general guideline and may be modified by Dr. Winter based on intraoperative findings, tissue quality, and individual patient factors. Do not progress through phases without clearance from your surgeon or physical therapist. Questions? Contact OrthoCarolina at (336) 765-5400.

Dr. S. Bradley Winter, MD • OrthoCarolina • Winston-Salem & Clemmons, NC • winstonsalemshoulder.com