

## Rehabilitation Guidelines | Arthroscopic Capsular Release (Frozen Shoulder Surgery)

### What to expect during your recovery

Rehabilitation after arthroscopic capsular release centres on **restoring movement as early as possible**. Unlike many other shoulder procedures, there are **minimal restrictions**, and early, frequent movement is essential to prevent stiffness from returning. Your rehabilitation will focus on **regular exercises and consistent movement**.

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### General guidelines

- **No sling is required**
- Begin moving your shoulder **as soon as possible after surgery**
  - Immobilisation will allow scar tissue to re-form
- Physiotherapy should start **within the first 1–2 days**, at least with home exercise
- Exercises should be performed **multiple times per day**
- Regular **ice therapy** is recommended (every 2 hours for 20 minutes in the first 48 hours, then as needed)
- Pain relief tablets may be used as prescribed to allow effective participation in exercises

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### Days 1 - 14: Immediate movement

This is the most important phase of recovery, focusing on regaining movement.

Sling use is not advised

**Driving:** within a couple of days of surgery

Desk based and light manual work possible

**Exercise at least 3 times per day**, preferably more whenever convenient

Exercises and movements:

- **Pendulum exercises** (circular movements of the arm)
- **Assisted shoulder flexion**
  - Raising the arm with assistance to maximum allowable
  - Wall climbs or pulleys
- **External rotation** to maximum tolerated
  - Use a stick to assist
- **Hand-behind-back stretching**
  - Use a towel or other hand to assist

**Important:**

- There are **no strict movement restrictions**
- The shoulder is structurally sound - discomfort may be felt, but nothing will break during exercise or use
- Exercising with a gentle push to the point of mild discomfort is safe

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### Weeks 2-6: Strengthening and ongoing movement restoration

Continue stretches as above to ensure maximum movement recovery

Formal physiotherapy visits are useful to guide recovery during this period

Add light resistance at home or gym

- External rotation with resistance band
- Seated rows
- Internal rotation strengthening
- pull-downs

Do not load heavily in the early phase and keep focusing more on movement range

Do not perform resistance exercises if the shoulder is too sore.

Strength restoration is secondary

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### Post-operative follow-up

- A review is usually scheduled at **2 weeks** for wound check
  - Mild persistent pain is normal with use and at night
  - If progress is limited due to higher pain levels then a hydrodilatation injection may be prescribed to assist, performed between 4 and 6 weeks after surgery. Contact Dr. Dallalana to discuss
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### Return to activity and expected outcome

- Most daily activities and desk work can be resumed very early after surgery
- Return to manual work is usual from 3 to 4 weeks
- Sports from 6 to 8 weeks pending comfort levels.
- Ongoing improvement in strength occurs over several months

The procedure commonly results in an 80 to 90% improvement in movement within 6 weeks, with the remaining movement slowly returning of its own accord over the next 12 to 18 months as the final areas of scarring from the frozen shoulder dissipate.

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### Your rehabilitation journey

Recovery after capsular release relies heavily on **early and consistent movement**. The more regularly you perform your exercises, the better your outcome is likely to be. Your physiotherapist and Dr Richard Dallalana will guide your recovery based on these guidelines