

THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2008 ★ "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" II COR. 3:17 ★ 75 CENTS ★ STATE EDITION

JANET SCHNEIDER / The Star / Shutterstock photo illustrations

4 ways to 'thaw' a frozen shoulder

Stiff, painful shoulders causing problems?

While the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons estimates the disorder affects about 2 to 3 percent of people in this country, Dr. Pete Sallay, of Methodist Sports Medicine/The Orthopedic Specialists, believes the number is higher because many are misdiagnosed or not diagnosed at all.

"Many people are thought to have bursitis or arthritis because the initial stages of the disorder can mimic these diseases," he said.

Although the exact cause is unknown, certain factors may increase your risk: age (40-70 years), gender (women are affected three times more than men), diabetes, thyroid conditions, cardiovascular disease and lung disease.



Here are ways Sallay says to identify the disorder and encourage the thaw:

1 | RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS: Onset is gradual; initial stage results in vague pain or constant dull ache in shoulder, radiating into the arm. Gradual stiffening occurs over weeks or months, as the capsule surrounding the joint thickens and shrinks. Rapid movements may cause sharp pain that can linger.

2 | UNDERSTAND THE STAGES: First "freezing" stage can last six weeks to nine months, with onset of pain and loss of motion. Over the next four to nine months, in the "frozen" stage, pain may improve but stiff-

ness remains. In the "thawing" stage, shoulder motion slowly returns to normal, but physical therapy is needed.

3 | SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE: Many patients ignore temporary symptoms. If significant pain progresses, combined with stiffness, restricted range of motion and night pain in arm, seek the care of an orthopedic surgeon.

4 | KNOW TREATMENT OPTIONS: Treatment consists of anti-inflammatory medications, occasional injections and, in later stages, physical therapy. Heat and cold can relieve short-term pain. Surgery may be needed if symptoms don't improve.

— Barb Berggoetz