ADHESIVE CAPSULITIS Treatment Guidelines
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Introduction

- Adhesive capsulitis, or “frozen shoulder,” is a shoulder with decreased ROM (active and passive) secondary to a contracted, thickened joint capsule.
- The normal course of frozen shoulder is periods of freezing, then frozen, and then thawing. Each period can last 4-6 months, with the total course lasting 12-24 months. There is a large amount of variability with recovery between patients.
- Goal: Gradual increase in ROM of shoulder.

Physical Therapy Treatment Guidelines

- Modalities – use as necessary for pain and inflammation control, muscle relaxation and joint stiffness.
- Moist heat to affected shoulder for 10 minutes prior to stretching.
- Stretching
  - Pendulums.
  - Self-stretching may include exercises such as:
    - Forward Flexion- from supine position, use opposite hand to grab affected arm at wrist and lift overhead. Walk fingers slowly up the wall, hold for a stretch, return to original position.
    - External Rotation – from supine position.
    - Internal Rotation – use towel behind back to pull affected arm behind back
    - Cross-body reach – use opposite hand to pull affected elbow across the body.
  - Mobilizations - techniques as indicated by PT staff.
  - Wand/Cane exercises – as directed by PT staff.
  - Follow stretching with 5-7 minutes of ice.
- Strengthen upper limb/shoulder/trunk muscles as needed.
- Rockwood shoulder exercises.
• Home exercise program – instruct patient/family members on methods of stretching to be performed 3-5 times per day. Pulleys should be sent home with patient.
• Stretches should be held for 20-30 seconds.
• Patients should passively stretch their own shoulder to a tolerable pain level daily.

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