

Traumatic Arthritis of the Shoulder

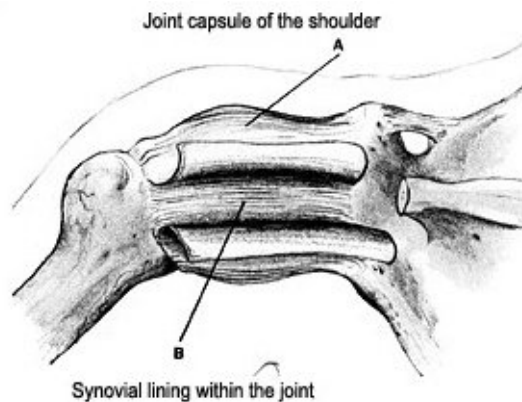
By Ben Benjamin, PhD

True or False: If traumatic arthritis of the shoulder is left alone, pain and limitation generally increase for the first few months but subside within a year.

Answer: True.

Traumatic arthritis of the shoulder (also referred to as frozen shoulder or capsulitis) usually follows a three-part pain cycle of 9-12 months before it heals. Pain and limitation increase over the first 3-4 months, remain the same for the next 3-4 months, and dissipate in another 3-4 months in most cases. In some cases, pain and limitation last for many years, destroying the integrity of the shoulder joint.

Traumatic arthritis might occur in many joints throughout the body. Joint inflammation can be caused by a physical trauma of some sort, a nutritional deficit, or hormonal changes. The resulting swelling and limitation of movement serve a protective function, and they typically diminish once that protection is no longer required. For example, an injury to one of the ankle ligaments will cause a traumatic swelling of the ankle joint; this helps to protect the area while healing takes place. Once the ligament heals, the swelling and inflammation usually disappear. The same often is true of the knee or the wrist.



In some cases, a jolt or shock of some kind causes

inflammation and swelling in a joint, but does not damage any ligaments or other joint-related structures. This often occurs in the shoulder. In such situations, the inner aspect of the joint capsule develops adhesive scarring, which restricts the movement of the joint. After the joint has been successfully treated, the protective muscle guarding subsides naturally because it's no longer needed.

Question: If an individual has traumatic arthritis of the shoulder, and the muscles of the arm and shoulder involuntarily spasm when you try to laterally rotate or abduct the arm, is it a good idea to work to relax the spasm so the person can move the arm fully?

Answer: No. The spasm is a protective secondary phenomenon that shields the shoulder joint from further harm. After successful treatment of the joint, it can be stretched if needed to restore full movement.

Click [here](#) for more information about Ben Benjamin, PhD.

[IMAGE]

Page printed from:

http://www.massagetoday.com/archives/2006/01/02.html?no_b=true