

Yin Yoga for Stiff & Painful Shoulder Joints



While Yin Yoga classes often focus on the lower body, this deep, stretchy practice has plenty to offer the upper body as well. What follows is a therapeutic sequence for adhesive capsulitis of the shoulder, aka frozen shoulder syndrome. Please note that if there are structural issues with your shoulder joints, where a medical professional has given alternate advice, please follow your physician's advice and do not embark on any stretching programmes until given the go-ahead to do so. Safety comes first.

Preparing for the Yin Yoga Sequence

Sit comfortably and breathe deeply throughout this preparatory exercise. Bend your elbows and place your fingertips on your shoulders (or approximate if your shoulders are very tight). Draw five circles with your elbows in one direction, then five in the opposite direction.

Half Dragonfly - Shoulder Stretch



Begin by resting on your left side with your left arm perpendicular to your body (as though you're reaching for something that's in front of you). Roll onto your belly so that your chest is resting on your left upper arm (or wherever you can rest without pain, as there may be some discomfort). Forehead rests on the floor. (If your forehead does not come to the floor, use a blanket for support.) Reach your right arm up so that it's alongside your head and press your right palm into the ground. Keep your legs relaxed and a comfortable distance apart.



If reaching the right arm overhead isn't possible, or if it's quite uncomfortable, you can bend your right elbow and rest your forehead on your forearm.

You can also rest your feet and ankles on a bolster if that's more comfortable for your lower back



Stay here for three minutes and breathe slowly and deeply. After you come out of the pose, gently move your left shoulder a bit before repeating the posture on the right side.

Supported Range of Motion Pose



Place a bolster or stack of blankets horizontally above the top of your mat. Lie on your back with your head toward the top of your mat, below the bolster. You can stabilise the bottom edges of the shoulder blades on a rolled or folded blanket (as pictured) or simply lie back on the floor. You can keep your legs extended and relaxed; you can bend your knees, take your feet as wide as your mat, and let your knees rest against each other; or you can cross your legs as you would for *sukhasana* (easy pose), as pictured on the next page. Reach your arms overhead, ideally resting your arms on the bolster or folded blankets (which can be stacked so your arms are at a comfortable height).



Your injured arm may need quite a bit of height; if one bolster isn't enough, try stacking two or adding a folded blanket.

Rest here for three or more minutes as you breathe and lengthen your spine. As your range of motion increases over the next few weeks, gradually lower the level of the support. After you move out of the pose, stretch and roll your shoulders a bit.

Wing on the Ground



Lie on your belly and extend your left arm out to the side at about shoulder height, palm facing down. Bend your right elbow, and place your right hand under your right shoulder as you would for cobra pose. Then roll onto your left side, keeping the left arm extended. Bend your knees toward your chest so there's a 90-degree angle at your hips, and then move your right leg to the floor behind your left leg, both knees still bent. Your right hand can remain on the floor in front of you, or you can take it behind your back, resting it on the back of your waist. Remain here for three minutes as you practice slow, deep breathing.



For a variation, you can clasp your right foot with your right hand and come into a side bow. So there is no strain, you can support the right knee with a bolster.

To release, roll to your abdomen and shrug and move your shoulders; then change sides.

Supta Gomukhasana - Reclining Cow Face



While lying on your left side, bend your right arm and bring it behind you so your hand is against your back and your fingers point up (like the bottom arm of *gomukhasana*, or cow face pose). Then roll onto your back, pinning your arm underneath you. Reach your left arm overhead so it's alongside your head, bend your elbow, and lift your upper back off the ground enough so that you can reach your left hand between your shoulder blades (like the upper arm of *gomukhasana*). Don't worry about clasping the hands. Bring your legs into *baddha konasana* (bound angle pose) by bending your knees, drawing the soles of your feet together, and allowing your knees to fall open to the sides. If you feel too much "tug" on your sacrum in this position, try placing blocks under your knees for extra support. Remain here for three minutes, breathing deeply. After coming out of the pose, do lots of gentle shrugging, circling, and general moving of both shoulders before proceeding to the other side.

Chest Opener Twist



Lie on your back and place a bolster on your left at shoulder level. Roll onto your right side. Bend your knees and, keeping them stacked, bring them up to about hip height. Reach your right arm forward, so that it's about shoulder height, with the palm up, and then reach your left arm across your body and bring your palms to touch. Next, open your left arm out to a T (feel the pectoral muscles stretching), so that it taps the bolster, then bring it back to the starting position with palms touching. Do this three times, opening to the T-shape on the inhalation and bringing your palms back together on the exhalation, letting your gaze follow the opening and closing. Then repeat the opening to a T but allow your hand to find the bolster and rest there, working to open your chest. You can turn your head in either direction. In fact, changing your head position from one side to the other midway through the pose can provide a beneficial stretch to both sides of the chest. Hold here for three minutes, and then return to a foetal position as a counter-stretch before switching to the other side.

Healing in Supported *Savasana*



Place a thinly rolled blanket lengthwise down the center of your mat. Lie back on it so that your head and back, down to your waist, are supported. Scrunch the blanket to nestle some of it into the curve of the neck but not so much that your head is no longer supported.



Rest here for 10 minutes, visualising heat and moisture expanding through your chest and shoulders.