

condition, which can last for months or years. Eventually, the shoulder will “thaw.” But in the meantime, the condition can range from inconvenient to agonizing.

Some people are more prone to the malady than others: those with diabetes, for example, and people of Asian descent, in whom frozen shoulder or shoulder pain and inflammation is the most prominent symptom of menopause, says Wittstein. In fact, in some Asian countries, it’s so common it’s known as “fifties shoulder” or “fifty-year shoulder.”

Estrogen loss and joint pain

As a woman ages, her ovaries make less estrogen—one of the most prominent hormones in women’s health—and with menopause, they cease estrogen and progesterone production altogether. That shift in sex hormones can affect everything from bone density to the heart and joints.

An estimated 50 percent or more of women experience arthralgia, or joint pain, during menopause. But estrogen’s effects on the musculoskeletal system are understudied and poorly understood—and there’s no comprehensive cure for menopause-related joint pain.



Frozen shoulder makes it difficult to stretch for pain relief, but ongoing research shows hormone therapy is a promising treatment.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARVI LACAR, GETTY IMAGES

