

COSTOCHONDRITIS

Inflammation (soreness and swelling) of the cartilage where the ribs attach to the sternum. The cause of the inflammation could be related to activity, overuse, injury, infection, or may be unknown. The pain that results is often increased by movements that change the position of the ribs, such as lying down, bending over, coughing, or sneezing. Pain may mimic that of heart disease or digestive disorders. It is more common in young adults, but can occur in any age group.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Pain in the chest wall, usually sharp in nature.
- Tightness in the chest.
- Pain may occur in more than one location and radiate into arm.
- Pain worsens with movement.
- Affected area is sensitive to the touch.

MEDICATIONS FOR COSTOCHONDRITIS

- Mild pain medications, such as aspirin or ibuprofen, may help relieve discomfort.
- Stronger pain medications or steroid injections may be prescribed, but these are rarely needed.
- Oral steroids may also be prescribed to reduce inflammation.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription today.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription tomorrow.
- Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your steroid prescription, even if you start to feel better.
- Steroids may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription.

RIB FRACTURE AND CHEST WALL CONTUSION

A chest wall contusion is the result of injury or trauma to the ribs and chest wall. A rib fracture occurs when one or more of the bones of the rib cage are broken. Clinically, these conditions are very similar. Evaluation is geared toward making sure the underlying organs and structures, such as the kidneys and lungs, are not injured. Treatment is focused on rest and pain control. Do NOT use a rib binder or belt if your doctor suspects a rib fracture. Use of either can cause fluid to collect in the unexpanded parts of the lungs, increasing your chances of developing pneumonia. Try coughing or taking deep breaths throughout the day as soon as you are able.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Pain that worsens when bending, twisting or pressing on the injured area.
- Pain that increases when taking a deep breath.

MEDICATIONS FOR RIB FRACTURE

- Anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen or naproxen.
- Narcotic pain medications may also be prescribed.
- Nerve blocks may be used for patients with multiple rib fractures.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Since the muscles of the chest wall must stretch and contract continually in order for us to breathe, many conditions of the chest wall can take several weeks to heal completely.

GENERAL MEASURES

- An X-ray or bone scan may be done to rule out other disorders.
- Use a heating pad or ice massage on the affected area. Use the one that feels better for you.
- Avoid sudden movements that will intensify the pain.
- Gently stretching the chest muscles several times a day may be helpful for costochondritis but not rib fractures.
- Activities may need to be limited until symptoms improve.

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF:

- Pain continues or gets worse after treatment or pain increases suddenly.
- You develop a cough with discolored or blood-tinged sputum.
- You develop a fever.
- You experience shortness of breath, difficulty breathing or wheezing.
- You experience abdominal pain.
- You notice blood in your urine.
- You notice swelling in your legs
- Increased pain in the neck, shoulders or jaw.