



## Information for patients, relatives and carers

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# Rib/Chest Injury

Rib injuries can be very painful, but they heal with minimal treatment and do not require any strapping.

On most occasions, for an isolated rib fracture or bruising, a chest x-ray is not required. We can treat and advise you after performing a clinical examination.

### **To ease the pain and discomfort of rib injuries you should:**

- ✓ Take painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen - Avoid taking ibuprofen for 48 hours after your injury as it may slow down healing
- ✓ Hold an ice pack (or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel) to the affected ribs regularly for the first few days to bring down any swelling
- ✓ Rest and take time off work if you need to
- ✓ To clear your lungs and reduce the risk of a chest infection, take 10 slow, deep breaths every hour
- ✓ Breathe normally and cough when you need to – this helps clear mucus from your lungs to prevent chest infections. If you find this too painful, increase your painkiller dose if required, ensuring you do not go over the maximum dose on the leaflet in the pack
- ✓ If you need to cough, hold a pillow against your chest
- ✓ Walk around and sometimes move your shoulders to help you breathe and clear mucus from your lungs
- ✓ Try to sleep more upright for the first few nights

### **To ease the pain and discomfort of rib injuries, you should NOT:**

- ✗ Wrap a bandage tightly around your chest to stop your lungs expanding properly
- ✗ Lie down or stay still for a long time Strain yourself or lift heavy objects
- ✗ Play any sports or do any exercise that makes your pain worse
- ✗ Smoke – stopping smoking may also help your recovery

It is not unusual for rib injuries to become more painful before they improve. You may notice a slight increase in pain and discomfort about five to 10 days after the injury. This is normal and nothing to worry about.

A bruised or fracture rib can take three to six weeks to heal if you are concerned about returning to work or sport please consult your GP.

If you develop any breathing difficulties, an increase or discolouration of phlegm or cough up blood you should contact your GP for further assessment.

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① If you have further concerns about your condition, please contact your GP. If you are not sure what to do, call 111 or get help from 111 online:

<https://111.nhs.uk/> When to use NHS 111 online or call 111 - NHS ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk))

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.PatientExperienceTeam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.PatientExperienceTeam@nhs.net).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

## **Leaflets in alternative languages or formats**

If you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print, Easy Read or audio, please ask the staff who are looking after you.

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