



Patient Information : Rib Injuries



Cork Emergency Medicine

EMed.ie

A rib fracture is a break or crack in a rib. These don't always show on x-ray, but can be diagnosed on examination. You may have one or more fractures; these will heal on their own in about 4 to 6 weeks. It is important to follow the advice below to avoid complications.

When you go home

- Most importantly - **stop smoking**.
- Avoid strenuous activity, especially lifting or physical exercise, for at least 4 weeks
- Breathing exercises - take a slow deep breath, hold it for 5 seconds, then let it out slowly. Repeat 5 times several times a day.
- Take regular pain killers as advised by the doctor
- Cough up any phlegm (sputum). If coughing hurts a lot, hold a pillow or cushion to your chest for support
- You should be able to cough at least once a day and this should be increased if you are bringing up phlegm. To cough without causing pain try:
 - hold a bath towel lengthways place the towel around your back, so that both ends come from under your arms to the front of your body
 - cross your arms and pull on opposite ends of the towel, across your chest
 - apply firm pressure and cough - if you find it difficult to manage on your own ask a relative to hold the towel ends and apply pressure for

Contact your own doctor if

- Your breathing gets worse
- Your pain gets worse and is not controlled with pain-killers
- You develop a high temperature, or
- You get a cold, or cough a lot, or have phlegm in your chest that you can't cough up

Seek medical help immediately if:

- You have trouble breathing, or
- You have nausea / indigestion or vomiting or pain in your stomach, or
- Your pain gets worse and is not helped by painkiller

