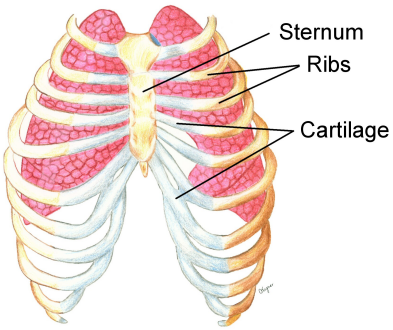
Bruised Ribs

Bruised ribs can occur by a blow to the chest or by a fall against a hard object. Usually these will be much better in a couple weeks. If x-rays were taken today and there are no broken bones (*fractures*), the *diagnosis* (learning what is wrong) of bruising is made. However, broken ribs may not show up for several days, or may be discovered later on a routine x-ray when signs of healing show up. If this happens to you, it does not mean that something was missed on the x-ray, but simply that it did not show up on the first x-rays. Earlier diagnosis will not usually change the treatment.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS



- Avoid strenuous activity. Be careful during activities and avoid bumping the injured ribs. Activities that pull on the injured ribs and cause pain should be avoided, if possible.
- For the first day or two, an ice pack used every 20 minutes while awake may be helpful. Put ice in a plastic bag and put a towel between the bag and the skin.
- Eat a normal, well-balanced diet. Drink plenty of fluids to avoid constipation.
- Take deep breaths several times a day to keep lungs free of infection. Try to cough several times a day. Splint the injured area with a pillow while coughing to ease pain. Coughing can help prevent pneumonia.
- Wear a rib belt or binder ONLY IF told to do so by your caregiver. If you are wearing a rib belt or binder, you must do the breathing exercises as directed by your caregiver. If not used properly, rib belts and/or binders restrict breathing which can lead to pneumonia.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You or your child has an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C).
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 100.5º F (38.1° C) or higher for more than 1 day.
- You develop a continual cough, associated with thick or bloody sputum.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have difficulty breathing.
- You feel sick to your stomach *(nausea*), have vomiting or belly *(abdominal*) pain.
- You have worsening pain, not controlled with medications, or there is a change in the location of the pain.
- You develop sweating or radiation of the pain into the arms, jaw or shoulders, or become light-headed or faint.
- You or your child has an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 102º F (38.9º C) or higher.
- **Your baby is 3 months old or younger with a rectal temperature of 100.4º F (38º C) or higher.**

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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