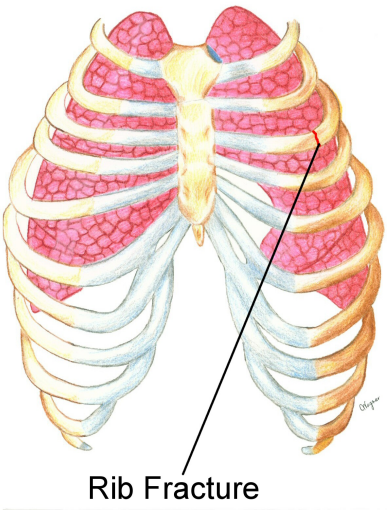
Rib Fracture

You have a rib *fracture* (a break in a rib). This can occur by a blow to the chest, by a fall against a hard object, or by violent coughing or sneezing. There may be one or more breaks. Rib fractures may heal on their own within 3 to 8 weeks. The longer healing periods are often associated with a continued cough or other aggravating activities.



HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Avoid strenuous activity. Be careful during activities. Avoid bumping the injured rib. Activities that cause pain and pulls on the fracture site(s) are best avoided if possible.
- 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, splinting the injured area with a pillow. This will help prevent pneumonia.
- Do not wear a rib belt or binder. These restrict breathing that 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:

- An oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C) develops, or as your caregiver suggests, that is not controlled by medication.
- You develop a continual cough along with thick or bloody sputum.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have difficulty breathing.
- You have nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain.
- You have worsening pain, not controlled with medications.

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