

What is a rib injury?

An injury to the ribs is usually caused by a direct blow or a fall onto a hard surface.

Sometimes laughing, coughing or exercise can also injure the ribs. Minor rib injuries are painful.

What is the treatment?

An X-ray to confirm a broken (fractured) rib is not necessary as the treatment of broken or bruised ribs is the same.

Bruised or broken ribs can take from two weeks to two months to heal and during this time you will need to take regular pain killers and do breathing exercises.

Pain control

It is important that you take regular pain killers to allow you to continue as normal. The pain may worsen after a few days due to you becoming more mobile.

Support the ribs with your hand while coughing.

When in bed, lie propped up on pillows to decrease pain and to decrease the risk of infection.

Do not lift, wherever possible, and avoid strenuous exercise.

Breathing exercises

Chest infections are a very common problem after minor rib injuries.

It is vital that at least five minutes of deep breathing exercises are undertaken every hour while the pain persists to try to avoid an infection developing.

1. Place your hand over the injured area.
2. Take a deep breath in.
3. Hold for 10 seconds then blow out.

If you are a smoker, it is advisable to refrain from smoking for as long as you are injured, as this can increase the risk of developing complications.

If you have further concerns about your injury or feel that your recovery is taking longer than expected please contact your GP.