

Physiotherapy

Broken Ribs

You have been given this information because you have been diagnosed with broken ribs. Your rib injuries should heal themselves, though this may take as long as two or three months. You may experience significant pain and this may increase for the first few days after your injury.

The importance of deep breathing and coughing exercises with broken ribs

Most problems after breaking your ribs will relate to your lungs.

Due to pain around your chest, your breathing may be shallow, and your cough may be weak. This can cause phlegm to build up in the lungs, which can lead to a chest infection or pneumonia.

You will be advised to do deep breathing exercises (see below) by your medical team, nursing team or physiotherapist. Please do these exercises regularly to minimise the risk of you getting a chest infection.

Breathing exercises

- Carry out your breathing exercises each waking hour throughout your hospital stay.
- Your nurse or physiotherapist will show you the positions in which to do the exercises. This will usually be sitting, in the upright position if your other injuries allow this.
- Breathe slowly in through your nose and out through your mouth. Breathe in fully, drawing air to the bottom of your lungs. **Do this six times, holding every breath for five seconds.** Your Physiotherapist may provide you with a device called a spirometer to measure how much air you are able to inhale, they will instruct you on how to use this if it is required.



Patient Information

- Cough deeply from your stomach to your throat
- You may or may not cough up some phlegm
- If you cough up some phlegm spit it into a pot or tissue and repeat the cycle until you are no longer coughing up any phlegm
- **Repeat the exercises every waking hour**
- If pain is preventing you from performing these exercises regularly, do inform your nurse so that you receive the right amount and type of pain relief

Walking (under guidance from your medical team / nursing team / physiotherapist)

When your condition allows, nursing staff or the physiotherapist will help you to sit in a chair and to walk. This may be on the day of your hospital admission.

You may have oxygen, drips and drains attached but this should not stop you getting out of bed with support from staff.

Once your ability to sit out in a chair and walk on the ward by yourself has been assessed, aim to sit out at regular intervals and complete regular short walks throughout the day. Gradually increase the distance as you are able.

If you have any concerns or queries regarding your exercises then please ask your nurse or physiotherapist for advice.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please ask and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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Document History

Department:	Physiotherapy
Contact:	25638
Updated:	February 2020
Review:	February 2022
Version:	2.1
Reference:	HIC/LFT/1890/15