

Children's Emergency Department

Broken or Bruised Rib(s): Parent/Carer Discharge Information



What does this mean?

You have been given this information because your child/adolescent has been diagnosed with broken/bruised ribs. An X-ray of their chest may occasionally be taken, but this is not usually required. It is possible, that there is only bruising, but this may be treated like a break.

Your child/adolescents rib injury should heal itself, but this may take as long as two to three months.

They should expect significant pain and this may well increase for the first few days after their injury. Most potential problems will relate to their lungs and to the effects of the pain on their recovery.

The main concern is that their breathing will remain too shallow and allow a chest infection to develop. This is especially likely in children with asthma or any other chronic lung conditions.

What should I do now?

- Don't let your child/adolescent over-do things, as excessive pain may hamper their breathing;
- They should try to return to as normal a life as possible as soon as pain allows;
- Take two to three full breaths every hour, to ensure they fully expand their lungs;
- Ensure they avoid people who are smoking;
- If they need to cough then let them do so! They can hold their chest to reduce discomfort;
- Obtain early advice from your GP if you and your family plan to fly or scuba dive or if your child/adolescent has any planned surgery in the next few months;



Patient Information

- Avoid strapping or bandaging their chest as this is now known to be harmful;
- Retain this information for future reference.

What medication can I give my child/adolescent?

Paracetamol and or Ibuprofen (if applicable) to be given for pain

Paracetamol 4-6 hourly last given at.....

Ibuprofen 6-8 hourly last given at.....

Return to school/activity:

You will need to inform the school/college that your child has sustained broken or bruised rib/s and they will need to refrain from certain activities, to rest to ensure complete recovery.

Seek medical advice if:

- You experience shortness of breath (not merely pain on breathing deeply);
- A cough develops with sputum or blood or if fever develops;
- The pain relief is insufficient despite our advice.

For further advice/information:

- Call NHS 111
- Contact your GP
- Contact the Paediatric Department on 024 7696 6934

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6934 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

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