

Emergency Department

Bruised or broken ribs

What does this mean?

You have been given this information because you have been diagnosed with broken/ bruised ribs. An X-ray of your chest may occasionally be taken, but is not usually needed. .

Your rib injury should heal itself, but this may take as long as two to three months. You should expect significant pain and this may well increase for the first few days after your injury.

Most potential problems will relate to your lungs and to the effects of the pain on your recovery. The main concern is that your breathing will remain too shallow and allow a chest infection to develop. This is especially likely in smokers, the elderly and people with asthma or other chronic lung conditions.

What should I do now?

- Use the pain relief provided as advised to allow you to follow the advice given;
- Do not over-do things, as excessive pain may affect your breathing;
- You 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 you fully expand your lungs;
- Avoid smoking and other peoples' smoke;
- If you need to cough then do so! Hold your chest to reduce discomfort;
- Obtain early advice from your GP if you plan to fly or scuba dive or if you have any planned surgery in the next few months;



Patient Information

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

Contact your GP or nearest Emergency Department if:

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

For further advice/information

Call NHS 111

Contact your GP also regarding employment issues such as sick notes

Finally, before you leave, please speak to a member of staff if:

- You think you need more advice or treatment for any pain or symptoms
- You need further advice about medications or instructions you have received
- You have any other emergency issues which still need to be addressed

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.

The trust operates a smoke free policy

To give feedback on this leaflet please email feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk

Document History

Department:	Emergency Department
Contact:	26200
Updated:	June 2021
Review:	June 2023
Version:	2.2
Reference:	HIC/LFT/1720/13