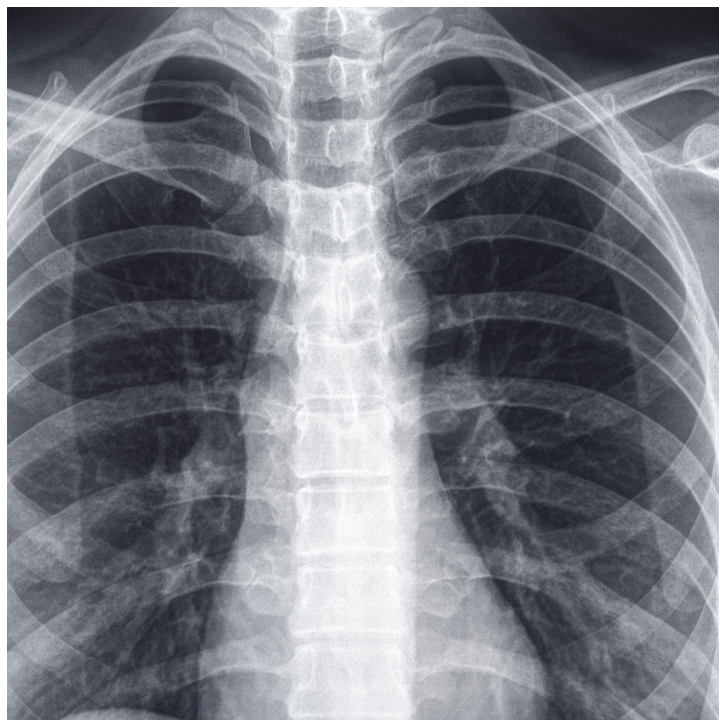
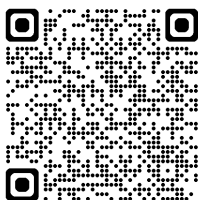


How to Treat a Chest Wall Injury



Telephone: 0300 125 6800 (Yate MIU) | 01275 546852
(North Somerset MIU) | 0300 124 6260 (Bristol MIU)



Scan the QR Code to view the MIU
and Illness page on the Sirona care
and health website.

Service provided by

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This leaflet provides information for patients with any of the following:

- Fractured (broken) ribs
- Fractured sternum (breastbone)
- Chest wall bruising

Injuries of the chest wall can be very painful.

Due to movement of the chest wall, deep breathing and coughing will be painful, but it is important to breathe and cough normally.

Chest wall injuries often take several weeks to get better. As a rough guide, a patient with one broken/bruised rib can expect to be in pain for 3 - 6 weeks and to be in discomfort for several more weeks and even longer if more than one rib is involved. Try to keep mobile and avoid contact sport until pain resolves.

It may be helpful to sleep sitting upright for the first few nights.

There is no specific treatment for broken ribs and it is not always necessary to x-ray the chest, as the treatment for a broken rib is the same as that for a bruised chest. This is to take painkillers and follow the guidelines that follow.

The main complication is stagnation of the normal chest secretions leading to chest infection. The risk is greater in smokers and people with chest disease.

To prevent infection, you must:

- Do regular deep breathing exercises i.e. 10 very deep breaths every hour.
- If you feel the need to cough, it is vital that you do cough to remove phlegm.

You should not suppress it, despite the pain. It will be more comfortable to cough if you support the painful area with a pillow or, after a few days, your hand.

Do take regular painkilling tablets, either as prescribe or as bought over the counter (e.g. Ibuprofen or Paracetamol). This will make it easier to cough and breathe deeply. Do not take cough linctus.

Pain relief medication

Pain relief medication can help you to reduce the pain allowing you to undertake any suggested exercises and movements of the injury. Moving will help ease the pain and speed up your recovery significantly.

Simple pain relief medications such as Paracetamol and Ibuprofen are often all that is required.

Please read the medication instructions before taking anything.

See your General Practitioner (GP) if:

- You become short of breath
- You start to cough up green, yellow or blood-stained sputum (phlegm)
- You become unwell with a temperature

This leaflet gives guidance only. If you have any queries or your symptoms worsen, please visit your GP, the Emergency Department, the minor injury unit or urgent treatment centre.

Call 111 if you urgently need medical help or advice but it's not a life-threatening situation.

For less urgent health needs, contact your GP or local pharmacist in the usual way.

Contact us

Our minor injury and urgent treatment centres support the local community with urgent minor injuries and/or illnesses. They are led by our specialist emergency nurse practitioners, who are fully trained in both adult and paediatric care.

They are walk-in centres so you don't need an appointment or a referral – you can just arrive at the centre during opening hours.

These centres are not appropriate for life-threatening injuries or serious illnesses.

Bristol Urgent Treatment Centre Minor injuries and illnesses Open 8am-8pm, 7 days a week South Bristol NHS Community Hospital Hengrove Promenade
Hengrove, Bristol BS14 0DE T: 0300 124 6260

Yate Minor Injury Unit Minor injuries only Open 8am-8pm, 7 days a week Yate West Gate Centre 21 West Walk, Yate BS37 4AX T: 0300 125 6800

Clevedon Minor Injury Unit Minor injuries only Open 8am-8pm, 7 days a week North Somerset Community Hospital Old Street, Clevedon BS21 6BS T: 01275 546852

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If you need help with this letter or leaflet, please tell us.**

We can help with larger print, audio (a message to listen to), Easy read,
British Sign Language or this information in another language.



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