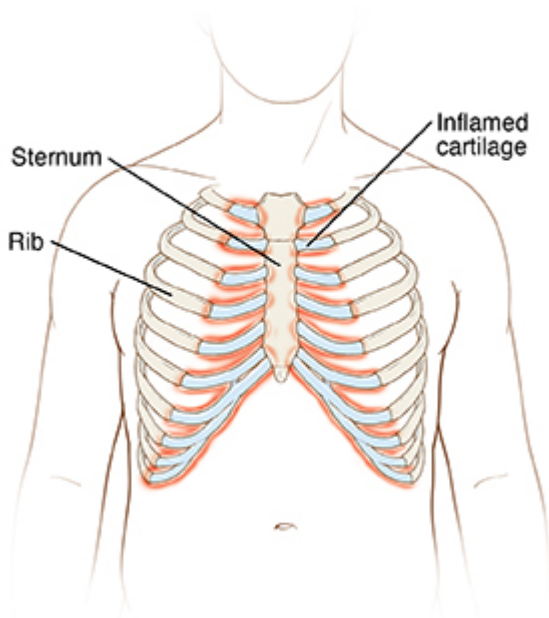


# Costochondritis

Costochondritis is inflammation of a rib or the cartilage that connects a rib to your breastbone (sternum). It causes soreness and may cause chest pain that can be sharp or aching or feel like pressure. The pain may get worse with deep breathing, movement, or exercise. In some cases, the pain is mistaken for a heart attack. But the condition is not serious. Read on to learn more about the condition and how it can be treated.



## What causes costochondritis?

The cause is not fully known. It may happen after a chest injury, chest infection, or bout of coughing. Some physical activities may lead to costochondritis. Large-breasted women may be more likely to have the condition. Often, the cause is unknown.

## Diagnosing costochondritis

There is no test for costochondritis. The condition is diagnosed by the symptoms you have. Your healthcare provider will give you a physical exam. They will ask about your symptoms and examine your chest for pain. In some cases, tests are done to rule out more serious problems. These tests may include chest X-rays, CT scans, or ECGs.

## Treating costochondritis

If a cause is found, treatment for that will likely relieve the problem. Costochondritis often goes away on its own. The course of the condition varies from person to person. It usually lasts from weeks to months. In some cases, mild symptoms continue for months to years. To ease symptoms:

- Take medicine as directed. These relieve pain and swelling. Ibuprofen or other NSAIDs are often advised. In some cases, you may be given prescription medicine, such as muscle relaxants.
- Don't do activities that put stress on your chest or spine.

- 
- Apply a heating pad (set to warm, not high, heat) to your breastbone several times a day.
  - Do stretching exercises as directed.

## **When to call the healthcare provider**

Call the healthcare provider right away if you have any of these:

- Pain that is not relieved by medicine
- Shortness of breath
- Lightheadedness, dizziness, or fainting
- Feeling of irregular heartbeat or fast pulse

Anyone with chest pain should see a healthcare provider, especially older adults and people at risk for heart disease.