

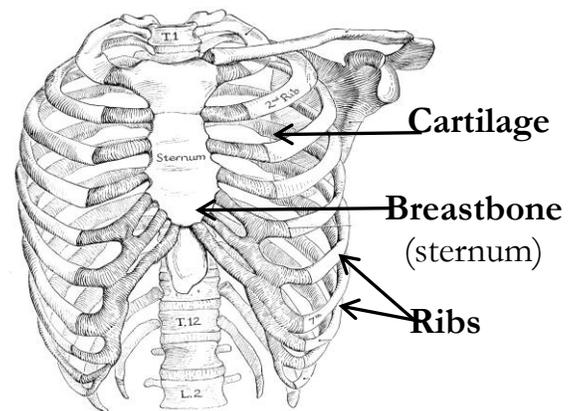
Costochondritis

Costochondritis (Cost-oh-kon-DRIE -tiss) is inflammation in the chest wall. It is a common cause of chest pain in children and is NOT related to heart problems. There is cartilage, a strong, stretchy material, between each rib and the breastbone (sternum) (Picture 1). The pain occurs between the joints, where the ribs meet the cartilage or where the cartilage meets the breastbone. Many different things can cause this pain. These include new physical activity, sports, lifting heavy objects and even forceful coughing. Other causes may be trauma or viral infections. The treatment is the same, even when the exact cause is not found.

Pain Symptoms

The kind of pain varies from person to person. It may include:

- Pain that is either sharp **OR** dull
- Pain located in a specific area of the chest
- Pain that starts suddenly **OR** over time
- Pain that lasts for hours **OR** days
- Pain that gets worse when you touch the sore area



Picture 1 The ribcage inside the body.

Treatment

This pain is treated with over-the-counter medicine such as ibuprofen (Motrin®) as directed by the doctor. **Do not give your child aspirin, or products that have aspirin in them.**

- It may take a couple of days for the medicine to start working.
- Have your child drink plenty of fluids.
- Your child should avoid activities that cause the pain or make it worse. This may include physical education at school, sports or lifting heavy objects.
- Cool compresses or heating pads may help with the pain.

Follow-Up

Usually no follow-up is needed. But if the pain does not improve in 5 days, make an appointment with your child's regular doctor.

When to Seek Emergency Medical Care

Go to your doctor or return to the Emergency Department immediately if your child has:

- Severe chest pain that is new, different or does not improve with medication.
- Trouble breathing or catching his breath.
- Pain that spreads to the jaw, to the back or down the arm.
- Dizziness, passing out or worsening chest pain with activity.
- The feeling that his heart is racing (palpitations).
- Any symptoms that are concerning to you.