

Costochondritis Information Hand-Out

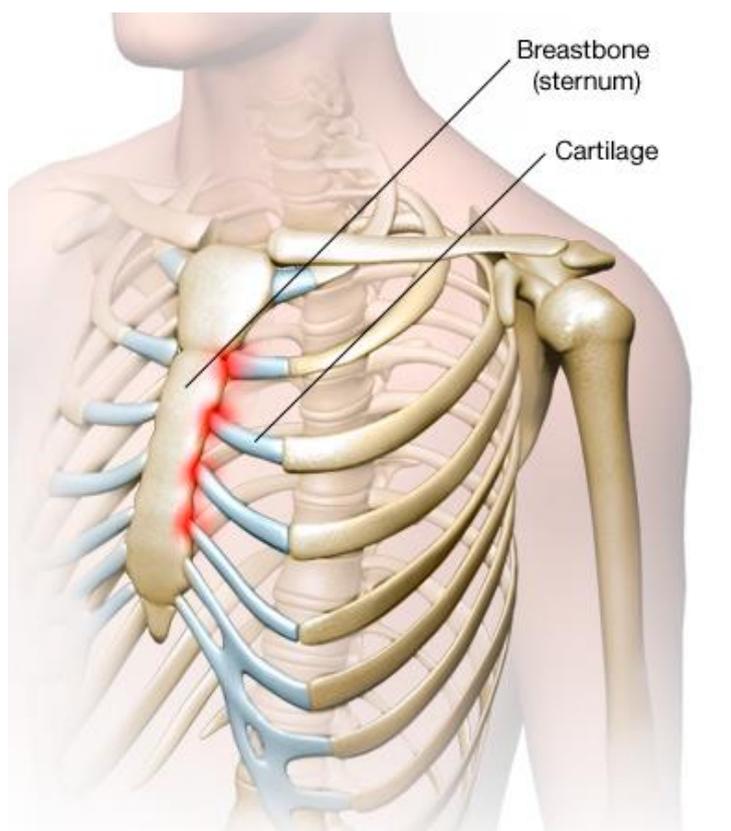
PARKSIDE GROUP PRACTICE

Costochondritis is when the cartilage connecting the breastbone and the rib becomes inflamed, the junction is referred to as the costosternal joint. Pain from this condition can mimic the signs of a heart attack and various other conditions relating to the heart. It can also mimic the signs of acid reflux and indigestion. Pains can also travel to the spine and between the shoulder blades. Some doctors refer to costochondritis as Tietze's syndrome.

Most of the time, those who have costochondritis don't have an attributed cause to their condition, although research tells us that poor posture is often to blame.

Costochondritis Anatomy

The chest consists of the portion of the trunk located between the abdomen and the neck. It holds the lungs and the heart, as well as that of the oesophagus and the large blood vessels connecting the heart. Inside of the chest wall, you will find cartilage, bones, ligaments and muscles holding all of the chest contents together. The rib cage consists of the ribs, sternum and the vertebrae.



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How to treat costochondritis:

1. Stretching Exercises

Undergoing gently, range-of-motion exercises has proven to be helpful in overcoming this condition.



A chest stretch is a great way to stretch the chest muscles, and improve posture. Place your elbow and hand on a door frame. Lean forwards, and rotate away gently from the door frame to create a stretch to the inside of your shoulder, chest and upper arm. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds, three times. Perform daily until your symptoms ease.

2. Physical Therapy

Physiotherapy and osteopathy are brilliant at improving posture, improving mobility to your ribs and spine, and reducing the muscle tension that pulls on the ribs. Typically a short-standing costochondritis will take less than 4 treatments to fix, with longer standing problems taking 6-8 treatments.

3. Medication

Your doctor may prescribe you anti-inflammatories, painkillers to reduce the pain and inflammation. Low dosage anti-depressants such as Amitriptyline is often used to control chronic pain, especially for those who are struggling to sleep at night.

Tips:

1. Women and those over the age of 40 are most prone to costochondritis.
2. Encourage children to use their school bags correctly. The bag shouldn't be too heavy or else their shoulders will slump. Show them how to carry the bag the right way.
3. Avoid any activities that trigger the pain. If tenderness and chest pain result from physical exertion, ask about safe guidelines for lifting and an exercise program.
4. Severe coughing and other strenuous activities are attributed to costochondritis.
5. Maintain good posture at work. Keep upright. Ensure your computer work station is set up correctly with the monitor at the correct height. All too often costochondritis is caused by poor posture.
6. Avoid stress as much as possible. Take steps to relax regularly through the week. Try deep breathing exercises, watching a good movie, or reading a book to de-stress.

Cold Application

It is widely agreed that costochondritis is an inflammatory condition. So one of the best ways to treat it is with an ice pack or frozen peas. Place them over your chest, where your pain is located, wrapped in a tea towel for 5-10 minutes three times per day. This is effective in reducing the pain and inflammation. You may need to continue this for several weeks.

