**WHAT IS BLUNT CHEST TRAUMA?**

Blunt chest trauma is where an injury occurs to the chest that does not necessarily break the skin, for example following a fall or car accident. There may be 1 or more rib fractures or a clinical suspicion of a rib fracture. The severity of the injury will vary from person to person and so will the management.

**MANAGEMENT OF PAIN**

This is the most important part of your treatment.

Pain is usually managed with tablet pain relief which may include paracetamol, ibuprofen, codeine or other analgesia. You may be given patches containing pain relief medication or if you are an inpatient you may require injections that block the nerve where the injury has occurred and stop the pain.

It is important that you tell the medical professional looking after you if the pain relief you have been given is not working as well as you expect.

Managing your pain well means you can breathe and cough more easily and also mobilise without discomfort. All of these things improve your healing time and help to prevent chest infections.

**BREATHING EXERCISES**

Breathing exercises should be performed regularly during the first few days following chest trauma.

As your mobility improves and your chest becomes clear, it is then okay to stop the exercises.

**BREATHING EXERCISES**

**Relaxed breathing** – start by sitting in a comfortable position and placing one hand on your stomach. Breathe in gently and slowly through your nose, and then out through your nose or mouth.

You should feel your stomach rise beneath your hand whilst your chest remains mostly still. Keep your shoulders relaxed.

**Deep breathing** – again, sitting in a comfortable position, take in as big a breath as you are able to comfortably, counting to 3 as you do and keeping your shoulders relaxed. Then breathe out. Repeat 3 or 4 times.

Repeat relaxed breathing. If you find you have excess sputum, breathing exercises will help you to clear it. If needed, you can also add huffing.

**Huffing** - 1 or 2 huffs (imagine you want to steam up the window) or cough. Repeat relaxed breathing. Continue this sequence until the sputum is cleared. If you find it is painful when you cough, try supporting the painful area with your hands, a towel or a pillow.

**Coughing -** a good cough should be had at the end of performing the chest exercises to clear the sputum that has been loosened. Again, if it is painful to cough you can use your hands, a towel or pillow to support the area that feels sore.

If you still have concerns, talk to your doctor or nurse who can refer you to the respiratory physiotherapists if needed.

**Mobilising -** it is important to do this as soon as possible after chest trauma. Pain relief may be required to do this and initially, a nurse or physiotherapist may assist you whilst you mobilise.

**BEING DISCHARGED FROM HOSPITAL**

When you are discharged from hospital, you may still need to take pain relief and perform the chest exercises above.

Injuries take time to heal and whilst it is important you mobilise, it is also important to give your body time to heal and not push it too hard, for example if you are performing manual labour.

A discharge letter will be sent to your GP so they know what has happened. If you have any concerns you can contact your GP to discuss these

**CONTACT YOUR GP IF:**

* Your pain becomes not well controlled by the pain relief you are discharged home with
* You have difficulty breathing
* You become generally unwell or develop a fever
* You smoke
* The pain relief medication causes you to become constipated

**SYMPTOMS TO CONTACT YOUR GP IMMEDIATELY ABOUT OR GO TO YOUR LOCAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT WITH:**

* Uncontrolled chest pain
* Acute onset chest pain
* Short of breath
* Breathing difficulties

These may be signs that things have changed and worsened, so further investigation and treatment may be needed

**BLUNT CHEST TRAUMA**

**Patient Information Leaflet**

**Emergency Department**

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**Salisbury**

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