

# FRACTURED RIBS

## 1. Understanding fractured ribs

- Rib fractures are one of the most common injuries to the chest. They will usually fracture at the point of impact or towards the back, where they are weakest.
- Typically, you will have pain on deep breathing and coughing and it will be tender over one or more ribs.
- X-rays may show the broken rib.
- There is potential for underlying organ injury when ribs are fractured: your doctor will examine you to exclude this.

## 2. Know the facts

**FACT**

Pain may last for up to eight weeks. It is important that you speak with your doctor or pharmacist about appropriate pain relieving medications.

**FACT**

Older people, smokers, those with lung disease, and people with multiple rib fractures are more at risk of developing complications such as pneumonia.

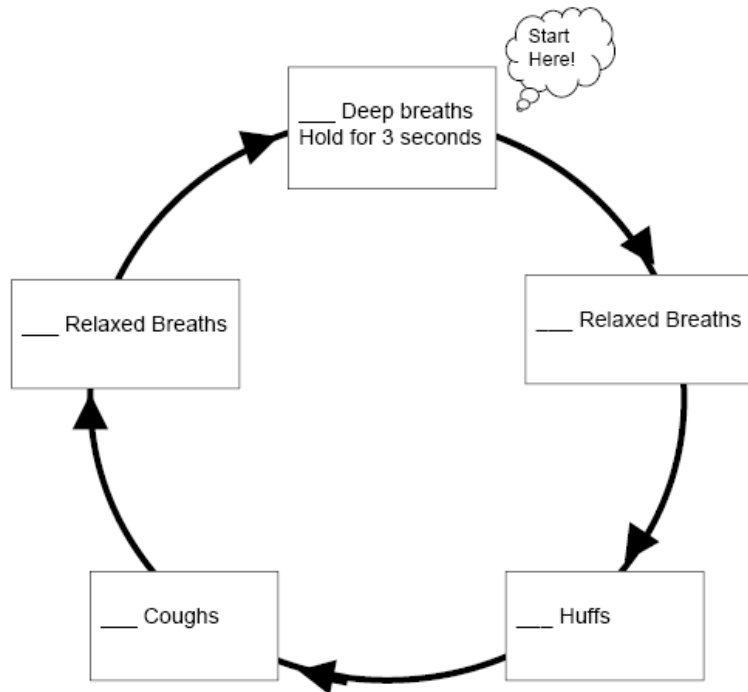
## 3. Tips to help your recovery

- It is most important that your pain is well controlled. Physiotherapy exercises will not be effective unless your pain is minimal.
- Take your pain relieving medications as prescribed by your doctor, and continue to speak with your local doctor or pharmacist about maintaining your pain relief. This should provide you with a good and constant level of pain relief which will avoid peaks of pain.
- Strenuous activities should be avoided for the first 3-4 weeks, then you can commence physical activity as pain allows. If the pain is increasing you are probably doing too much. Talk to your doctor or physiotherapist about this.
- Avoid contact sports for at least 6 weeks to prevent further damage, unless otherwise advised by your doctor or physiotherapist.

If you develop fever, uncontrollable cough, abdominal pain, have trouble breathing or cough up thick or discoloured phlegm – contact your doctor or hospital immediately.

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## 4. Exercises to try



Repeat \_\_\_ times  
Every hour

- Try holding a cushion firmly against the painful site when you huff & cough to decrease the pain.
- Sit out of bed and keep moving as much as you feel comfortable. This will decrease the risk of developing lung complications.

## 5. Follow up treatment

- If you have private health insurance or the injury is WorkCover, please follow up on your management with a private Physiotherapist.
- If you have a private Physiotherapist you already know, please provide them with the referral letter from the Emergency Department.
- If you have no private health insurance, it is not a WorkCover injury and you live in the Orange area you can get followed up at the Orange Base Hospital Physiotherapy Department, please provide them with the referral letter from the Emergency Department.

Orange Health Service  
Physiotherapy Department  
**6369 3300**