

Orthopaedic Connection

Costochondritis? Ouch!

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

One day you are fine and the next you have Costochondritis! How can this be? Why me?

What Is It?

It is a type of chest wall pain that seems to come out of nowhere. It is an inflammatory condition in the chest wall where the ribs attach near the breastbone (sternum).

Anatomy Lesson: The ribs in the front of your chest consist of cartilage and bone. The cartilage part of the rib is an elastic bridge between the bony part of the rib and the sternum. This elastic component helps our chest expand and contract.

Who Gets Costochondritis?

- It comes on more often suddenly than gradually.
- Most often in women.
- Commonly in people over 40.
- Occasionally affects children.
- No apparent cause.

Symptoms

- Sharp pain in front of the chest
- Increases with deep breaths
- Painful to cough
- Pain increases when raising arm on same side
- Can be in one or more ribs
- If pain occurs with swelling its called Tietze's

Maybe Heart Trouble?

Most people would wonder at this point about a heart attack. Unexplained chest pain, woman, over 40, chest pain. You are absolutely correct. Heart trouble must be ruled out. So –

- Careful history and good physical exam
- EKG
- Lab work (probably)
- Chest x-ray and possibly other imaging tests

Treatment

If heart trouble has been ruled out

- Pain medication is up to your doctor
- Antidepressant medication is often helpful
- Topical prescription medication
- Injection of steroid and local anesthetic

- Physical therapy modalities may help

What Else?

Fortunately costochondritis usually goes away on its own in a few weeks. Treatment can help reduce symptoms in most patients.

In a few unfortunate people the symptoms can persist for a few months.

If it does persist this long at least the patient is relieved to know that they do not have heart trouble such as angina.

Our goal is quality, highest standards and best outcomes.

Office Website and Gratiot County Herald Archive

Wow! Your window to the Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal world opens at www.orthopodsurgeon.com. It contains the Website Library of information, Your Orthopaedic Connection and GCH archive of all previous articles.

You will be amazed at all the helpful information it contains.

All of the information pertains to everything I treat in the office and hospital.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush