

# Argus Orthopaedic Zone

## 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 Argus Orthopaedic Zone Archive**

I sincerely appreciate all of you loyal readers and patients present and future and welcome all newcomers!

Besides what you read today there is a huge treasure trove of Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal information at [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com). It contains the Website Library, Your Orthopaedic Connection and complete archive of every Argus article I have written.

I specialize in you. Be well.

Dr. Haverbush