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Chest Injuries and Disorders

What is the chest?

The chest is the part of your body between your neck and your abdomen (belly). The medical term for your chest is thorax.

Your chest holds many important structures for breathing, digestion, blood circulation, and other important body functions. These structures include your:

- Ribs and breastbone
- Esophagus, the tube between your mouth and stomach
- Trachea, your windpipe
- Bronchi, the tubes that carry air from your windpipe to your lungs
- Lungs
- Pleura, a thin layer of tissue that covers the lungs and lines the inside wall of the chest space
- Heart and large blood vessels
- Thymus, a gland that's part of your immune system
- Nerves

What are chest injuries and disorders?

Chest injuries and disorders are problems that affect any of the organs or structures located in your chest.

There are many types of chest injuries and disorders, for example:

- Broken ribs
- Esophagus disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/esophagusdisorders.html>]
- Swallowing disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/swallowingdisorders.html>] , also called dysphagia
- Tracheal disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/trachealdisorders.html>]
- Bronchial disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/bronchialdisorders.html>]
- Lung diseases [<https://medlineplus.gov/lungdiseases.html>] and collapsed lung [<https://medlineplus.gov/collapsedlung.html>]
- Pleural disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/pleuraldisorders.html>]
- Heart diseases
- Mediastinal diseases, which are tumors, inflammation, and other problems with the structures in the mediastinum, which is the space between your lungs, breastbone, and spine
- Thoracic aortic aneurysm [<https://medlineplus.gov/aorticaneurysm.html>]
- Thoracic outlet syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/thoracicoutletsyndrome.html>]

Chest injuries may happen from the force of car accidents, falls [<https://medlineplus.gov/falls.html>] , or sports injuries [<https://medlineplus.gov/sportsinjuries.html>] . Or the chest may be pierced by a bullet or sharp object. Because your chest holds so many important structures, certain chest injuries may be life-threatening.

How are chest injuries and disorders diagnosed?

Diagnosis of chest injuries or disorders depends on the type of symptoms you're having and whether you've had a chest injury. Injuries are usually obvious, but in most cases, you'll need tests to know how serious an injury is.

There are many types of tests for diagnosing different types of chest injuries and disorders, for example:





- Diagnostic imaging tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/diagnosticimaging.html>]
- Heart tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/hearthealthtests.html>]
- Lung function tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/lung-function-tests/>]
- Bronchoscopy [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/bronchoscopy-and-bronchoalveolar-lavage-bal/>]
- Pleural fluid analysis [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/pleural-fluid-analysis/>]
- Dysphagia tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/dysphagia-tests/>]
- Biopsy [<https://medlineplus.gov/biopsy.html>]

Treatments will depend on the type of chest injury or disorder you have.

Start Here

- Introduction to Chest Injuries [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/home/injuries-and-poisoning/chest-injuries/introduction-to-chest-injuries>] (Merck & Co., Inc.)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/es-us/hogar/traumatismos-y-envenenamientos/traumatismos-tor%C3%A1gicos/introducci%C3%B3n-a-las-lesiones-tor%C3%A1gicas>]


Diagnosis and Tests

- Bronchoscopy and Bronchoalveolar Lavage (BAL) [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/bronchoscopy-and-bronchoalveolar-lavage-bal/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/broncoscopia-con-lavado-broncoalveolar/>]
- CAT Scan (CT) - Chest [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/chestct>]
 (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/chestct>]
- Chest X-Ray (Radiography) [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/chestrad>]
 (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/chestrad>]
- Tests for Lung Disease [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/lung-tests>]  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/pruebas-pulmonares>]

Treatments and Therapies

- Chest tube insertion - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100008_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100008_1.htm]
- Chest Tube Thoracostomy [<https://www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/resources/chest-tube-thoracostomy.pdf>]
(American Thoracic Society) - **PDF**

Living With



- Pulmonary Rehabilitation: MedlinePlus Health Topic [<https://medlineplus.gov/pulmonaryrehabilitation.html>]
 (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pulmonaryrehabilitation.html>]

Specifics

- Chest Wall Disorder: Pectus Excavatum [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/pectus-excavatum.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/pectus-excavatum.html>]
- Costochondritis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000164.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000164.htm>]

- Mediastinal Masses [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/home/lung-and-airway-disorders/pleural-and-mediastinal-disorders/mediastinal-masses>] (Merck & Co., Inc.)
- Mediastinitis [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/home/lung-and-airway-disorders/pleural-and-mediastinal-disorders/mediastinitis>] (Merck & Co., Inc.)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/es-us/hogar/trastornos-del-pulm%C3%B3n-y-las-v%C3%ADas-respiratorias/trastornos-pleurales-y-del-mediastino/mediastinitis>]
- Rib Fractures [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/home/injuries-and-poisoning/chest-injuries/rib-fractures>] (Merck & Co., Inc.)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/es-us/hogar/traumatismos-y-envenenamientos/traumatismos-tor%C3%A1cicos/fracturas-de-las-costillas>]

Clinical Trials


- ClinicalTrials.gov: Mediastinal Diseases [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Mediastinal+Diseases%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Rib Fractures [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Rib+Fractures%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Thoracic Diseases [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Thoracic+Diseases%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Thoracic Injuries [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Thoracic+Injuries%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: The impact of chest radiography on patient management in acute trauma... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40659863>]
- Article: Surgical stabilization of rib fractures improves survival in functionally dependent trauma... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40640935>]
- Article: Comparative efficacy of tunnel minimally invasive technique versus traditional open reduction... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40635080>]
- Chest Injuries and Disorders -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Rib+Fractures%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+OR+%22Thoracic+Injuries%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+OR+%22Thoracic+Diseases%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>] 

Children

- Chest Wall Disorder: Pectus Carinatum [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/pectus-carinatum.html>]
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/pectus-carinatum.html>]
- Costochondritis (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/costochondritis.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/costochondritis.html>]
- Pectus excavatum repair - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100035_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100035_1.htm]

Patient Handouts

- Chest tube insertion [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002947.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/002947.htm>]
- Costochondritis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000164.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)

Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000164.htm>]

- Mediastinal tumor [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001086.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001086.htm>]
- Pectus excavatum [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003320.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003320.htm>]
- Rib fracture - aftercare [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000539.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000539.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Chest CT [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003788.htm>]

Chest MRI [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003794.htm>]

Chest tube insertion [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002947.htm>]

Chest tube insertion - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100008_1.htm]

Chest x-ray [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003804.htm>]

Costochondritis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000164.htm>]

Mediastinal tumor [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001086.htm>]

Mediastinitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000081.htm>]

Mediastinoscopy with biopsy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003864.htm>]

Pectus carinatum [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003321.htm>]

Pectus excavatum [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003320.htm>]

Pectus excavatum - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000298.htm>]

Pectus excavatum repair [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002949.htm>]

Pectus excavatum repair - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100035_1.htm]

Pneumomediastinum [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000084.htm>]

Rib fracture - aftercare [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000539.htm>]

Ribcage pain [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003109.htm>]

Slipping rib syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007765.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Chest Pain [<https://medlineplus.gov/chestpain.html>]

[Collapsed Lung \[https://medlineplus.gov/collapsedlung.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/collapsedlung.html)

[Pleural Disorders \[https://medlineplus.gov/pleuraldisorders.html\]](https://medlineplus.gov/pleuraldisorders.html)

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