

A blow to the ribs. What you need to know and when you need to have an X-ray

After a rib injury, usually caused by a blow or a fall, we often worry whether the ribs are cracked or broken. However, the diagnosis does not change the treatment so, in most cases, an X-ray is not necessary.

Is having an X-ray dangerous?

As with any X-ray procedure there is some radiation exposure, which can be harmful for the health. Therefore, pregnant women should avoid having one. X-rays are not recommended in cases that result from a false movement or cough, blow or non-specific pain in the chest, ribs or some muscle.

When should you have an X-ray?

If it is suspected that there may be lung damage, the doctor will order an X-ray of the chest, not of the ribs. Rib x-rays should only be taken if a report is required for legal reasons, such as physical assault, suspected abuse, accident, etc.



When is an X-ray not necessary?

When there is a crack or a fracture, or only a contusion, the doctor will check whether the lungs have been damaged by performing a physical exam, without any additional tests. If there is no lung damage, treatment for pain and rest will be prescribed.

What can be done to help recovery?

The following recommendations will help you to feel more comfortable:

- Apply an ice pack to the injured area for 10 to 20 minutes 3 times daily. Do not apply the ice pack directly to the skin, wrap it in a cloth.
- If you need to sneeze or take a deep breath, holding a pillow against the injured area will make it less painful.
- Sleep in the position that is most comfortable for you, even if it is on the injured side.
- Avoid high-impact activities, do not lift heavy objects or play contact sports.

The information contained here is informational and not intended to replace medical advice offered by your physician. If you have any questions, please ask your doctor or call 061/Salut Respon.