

Dear Patient

Costovertebral Joint Sprain

WHAT IS A COSTOVERTEBRAL JOINT SPRAIN ?

Costovertebral Joint Sprains tend to occur suddenly, often from a twisting movement or from excessive coughing, sneezing or lifting. The sudden force overstretches the ligaments helping attach a rib to the spine causing sharp pain to be felt through the mid to upper back region, sometimes spreading along the line of the ribs towards the chest.

ANATOMY

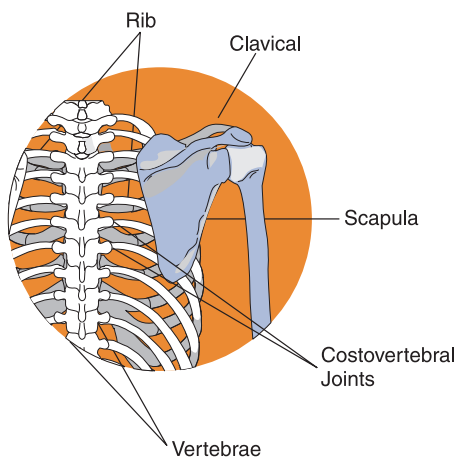
There are 12 pairs of costovertebral joints on each side of the spine - formed where each rib meets a vertebral body. Strong ligaments connect the ribs to the vertebrae and support each joint. When a joint is sprained, the ligament may be damaged or torn, causing pain and inflammation.

TREATMENT

Relief of symptoms often occurs with very few treatments, although this does vary.

Treatment may include:

- Mobilisation and/or manipulation of the costovertebral joints, ribs and spine.
- Ice, heat and electrotherapy to reduce inflammation and pain over the affected joint.
- Massage and stretching to reduce any muscle spasm or tightness.
- Breathing exercises
- Taping



Above: Posterior view of the spine highlighting the attachments of the ribs to the vertebral column.

COMMON SYMPTOMS

- Sharp pain felt over the costovertebral joint at the back, around the sides, and even the front of the chest.
- Pain relieved by lying on one side and aggravated by lying on the other.
- Pain made worse by deep breathing or coughing.
- Pain which may mimic indigestion or angina.
- Associated muscle spasm which may severely limit movement of the head and trunk.

OTHER CONDITIONS THAT MAY CAUSE SIMILAR PAIN

- It is important that other causes of pain are investigated and eliminated before the diagnosis of costovertebral joint sprain is given as the symptoms can mimic those of more serious medical conditions.



"Taping may help reduce pain and muscle spasm caused by costovertebral joint sprains"



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