

Rib Fracture Discharge Instructions

You have sustained single or multiple rib fractures. This can be very painful and may require up to 6 weeks to heal. Pain control and breathing exercises are the keys to recovery. Rest and limit your activity as directed by your provider. Do not pull, push, or lift heavy objects or participate in sports. Continue to stay active with everyday activities.



You may be prescribed several different types of pain medicine by your providers. These may include the following:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
 - If you have liver disease, please ask your provider if it is safe to use Tylenol.
- Narcotic pain medications
 - Do not drink alcohol, drive, or operate heavy machinery while taking the narcotics.
 - Some of the narcotics may include acetaminophen (Tylenol). If so, be wary of taking additional acetaminophen (Tylenol) with these medications.
 - Take these medications with food to decrease nausea or vomiting
 - Narcotics may increase constipation; increase your fluid and fiber intake. You may also need to take stool softeners.
- NSAIDs, such as Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or Naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn), will help decrease the pain, fever, and swelling.
 - If you are on any blood thinners, have a history of kidney disease or stomach ulcers, please ask your provider if it is safe to use NSAIDs.
- Muscle relaxers (methocarbamol, cyclobenzaprine, or tizanidine) may also be prescribed to you. Use these as directed especially if you are having muscle spasms.

Topical therapy may also help with pain. These may include the following:

- Apply ice (in a plastic bag, wrapped in a towel) or cold packs for up to 15-20min per hour.
- Lidocaine patches may also be prescribed on discharge. You may use up to 3 patches for up to 12 hours per day. Stop using the patches if you have redness, dizziness, drowsiness, blurred vision, ringing in your ears, or become confused.
- Apply heat using a heat pack or hot showers/baths.

Incentive Spirometer:

Take deep breaths along with gentle coughing 10 times per hour while awake. Please take your hospital or Emergency Department issued incentive spirometer home with you. Please follow steps below on how to use an incentive spirometer and scan the QR code below for a video demonstration:



1. Sit upright and hold the device
2. Place the mouthpiece in your mouth and close your lips around the mouthpiece
3. Breathe out normally
4. Breathe in slowly and as deeply as possible
5. Repeat at least once an hour while awake

Even though you are stable for discharge home, there may be late complications of collapsed lung or pneumonia. **Seek immediate care if you have the following:**

- Trouble breathing or sudden shortness of breath
- Increasing pain
- Fever
- Productive or bloody cough
- Side effects from the medications