



Want to know a little more?

Rib Pain

The ribs of the skeleton attach from the breastbone at the front of the chest, and form a cage around the chest organs to then attach to the spine on the back. The junction between the rib and the spine is the costovertebral joint.

The costovertebral joint is a common source of back pain, frequently with referral of pain around the chest wall. Such pain is notable with deep breathing or coughing.

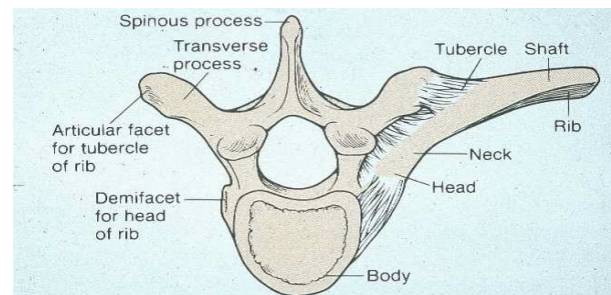


Figure 6.39 Articulation of a rib with a thoracic vertebra as seen in a superior view.

These joints can be damaged by acute forceful event such as falling, moving heavy items or with rib fractures. They may also be irritated during pregnancy due to the posture of both the mother and baby.

With injury the joint may be strained causing overstretching of the supporting ligaments, or it may be just excessive tightness restricting normal movement at the joint.

Management of costovertebral joint injury focuses on regaining normal movement at the joint by hands on mobilisations or manipulation by your physiotherapist. You may also need specific exercises to stretch the surrounding structures or strengthening exercises to support surrounding structures.

With rib pain during pregnancy management still focuses on normal joint movements, but also on postural exercises to correct the joint irritation. The use of a supportive brace can be used if pain is recurrent.

Disclaimer: The information on this page is intended as a guide only, and does not constitute advice or treatment. For further information, please see your qualified physiotherapist

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