

Clinical Practice Guideline (CPG) Rib Fracture Management: Critical Care

Original Date: 2014

Latest Approval: 1/6/2026

Extubated or recently extubated, GCS > 12, > 13yo (+) rib and/or sternal fractures, absence of cervical spinal cord injury

**Meets criteria for admission to ICU
(see rib fracture admit guideline)**

**> 65?
≥ 3 rib fractures?**

yes

Determine need and frequency for ABG

Determine need for daily chest XR

Consider Anesthesia Consult

Provider

On Admission - order GS ADULT Rib Fracture Management

Order set includes:

Activity

- Out of Bed during the day
- Ambulate TID

Nursing Orders

Notify provider when PIC score ≤ 5 and/or if any category score = 1 after interventions

- Ice pack
- Place PIC board/provide pt and family with education
- Set Daily IS Goal

Medications

- Duoneb (choose option)

Others

- IS-q1h, 10 times every hour, WA
- Flutter Valve
- Oximetry
- Resp Communication- assess q4h and review PIC score
- PT/OT orders- evaluate and treat

Other:

- Incorporate reporting of PIC score and goals in daily team rounds

RT

- Assess pt within 1h of admit
- Administer bronchodilators q4h and PRN via MetaNeb
- Set IS goal & alert levels
- Oral Care q4h

Routinely:

- Assess q4h
- Monitor PIC for trends
- Report on PIC score in daily team round

Notify provider when PIC score ≤ 5 and/or if any category score = 1 after interventions

***Interventions: Bronchodilators, Pain Medication, Mobilization**

Nursing

- OOB during day and ambulate TID
- HOB >30 degrees if not contraindicated (reverse Trendelenburg if needed for spinal precautions)
- Instruct pt & family on PIC scoring and rationale
- Place PIC scoring board in room
- Set IS goal
- Continuous pulse oximetry
- Oral Care q4h
- IS q1h (10x) WA and cough & deep breath

Routinely:

- Chart PIC score, IS volume, and pain score **q2h**
- Report on PIC scores and goals in daily rounds

Notify provider when PIC score ≤ 5 and/or if any category score = 1 after interventions

References:

American College of Surgeons. (2025). *Best Practice Guideline Management of Chest Wall Injuries*. https://www.facs.org/media/qdgliayt/2025_tr_bestpracticesguidelines_chest-wall.pdf

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Karlson, K. A., & French, A. (2022) Initial evaluation and management of rib fractures. UpToDate. Retrieved December 6, 2022, from <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/initial-evaluation-and-management-of-rib-fractures#H12>

Physician clinical judgement supersedes this guideline

**For rib stabilization consideration refer to:
*Billings Clinic Surgical Stabilization of Rib Fractures Guideline***