

# Rib Fractures Becoming Serious Injuries

*Rib fractures tell a lot regarding the forces involved in the trauma, risk for associated injuries, and prognosis.*

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Approximately fifteen percent of trauma patients have chest wall trauma. Rib fractures, the number, and location tell a lot regarding the forces involved in the trauma, risk for associated injuries, and prognosis.

Fracture of the first rib is a hallmark of severe trauma regardless of how the patient presents and is associated with a thirty-three percent death rate. The reason is because this rib is very stable and strong, making a fracture uncommon unless there are high speed collisions involved. Fifty percent of patients with a first rib fracture have a brain injury, and twenty percent will have multiple rib fractures - usually more than six - that leads to respiratory failure.

Elderly patients who fracture ribs have increased morbidity and mortality with an increase with the number of ribs fractured. A retrospective study indicates that fifteen percent of elderly patients with an isolated rib fracture developed pulmonary complications within 48 hours indicating these patients require close follow up if they are not admitted for observation. Elderly patients with three or more fractures are at high risk



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for complications and must be followed initially in an intensive care unit. Outcome studies have determined that regardless of the age of the patient, three or more rib fractures represent an indication for hospitalization.

Children have more flexible ribs and the force required to fracture a rib is significantly more than in adults. Children with two or more rib fractures caused by trauma have a 20 times higher mortality than children who did not suffer a rib fracture.

Eighty-five percent of the deaths in patients with rib fractures occur in those with six or more rib fractures and the elderly population. Any person with intractable pain from a traumatic rib fracture is at risk for complications including atelectasis and pneumonia. Uncontrolled and intractable pain is an indication for admission.

Only a small percentage of patients with a rib fracture will develop a symptomatic nonunion which means that bone does not heal leading to chronic pain and require surgical fixation.

[Dr. Vigna](#) is a California lawyer, who focuses on [catastrophic injuries](#) including spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injury, birth injury, vaginal mesh neurological injuries, and elder abuse including hospital and nursing home decubitus ulcers. [Greg Vigna, MD, JD, PLC](#) has a non-exclusive referral relationship with Ben Martin Law Group, a national pharmaceutical injury law firm in Dallas, Texas. The lawyers represent the seriously injured, nationwide.

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