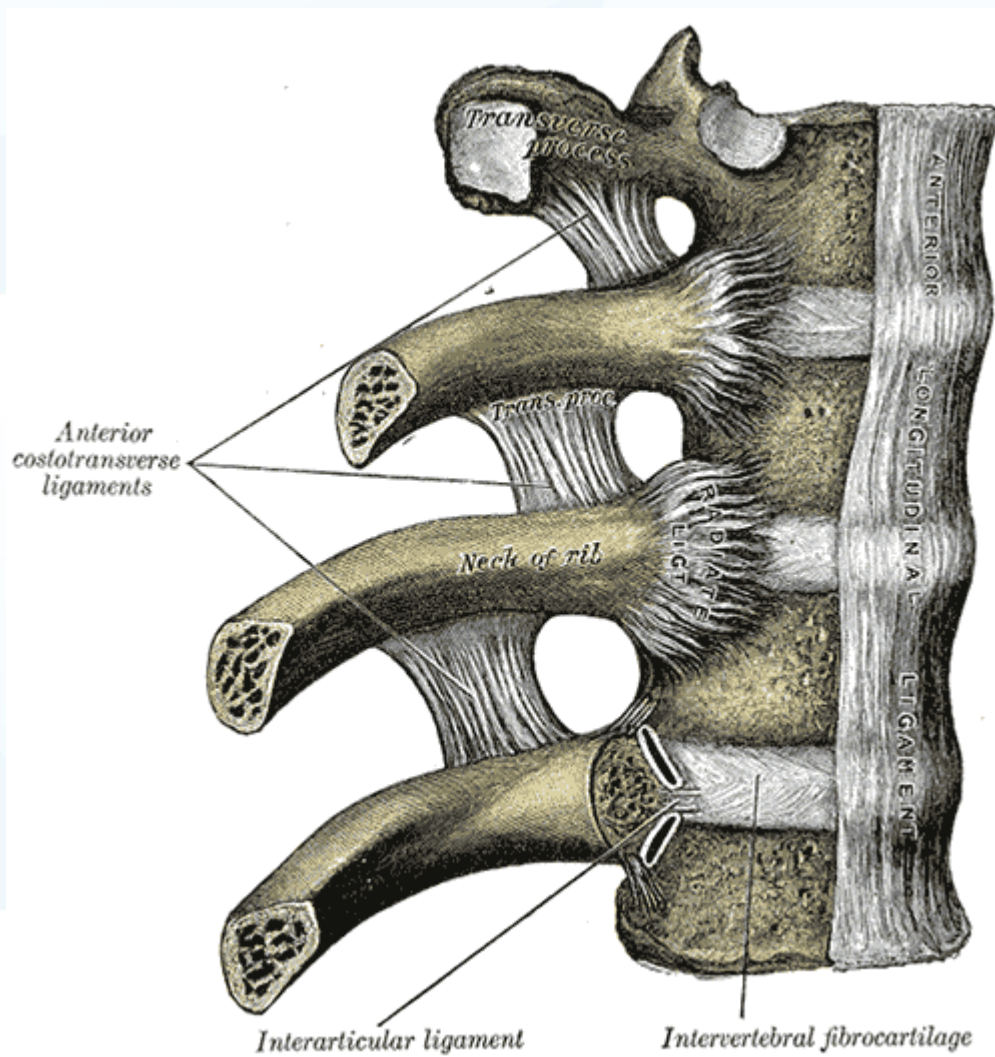


Costovertebral Joint Disorders

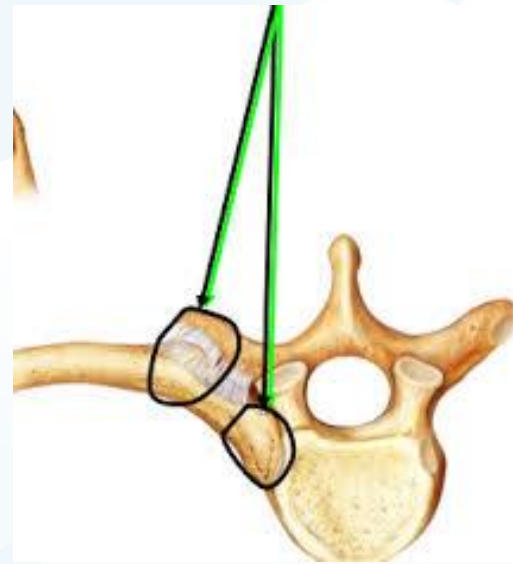
The costovertebral joint is the articulation lying between the vertebrae and rib on the same level. It is important for normal breathing because the rib needs to swivel to some extent like that of a bucket handle moving from side to side. Just like any other joint, the structures that make up this joint can be injured. Overstretching injury is the most common for the joint. When the rib cage and trunk are rotated or when an impact occurs, the joint can become injured.

Costovertebral Joint Disorder Anatomy

At the various levels of the spine, the ribs are connected with the corresponding vertebrae on the right and with small joints on the left. The rib joints ranging from the second to the tenth vertebrae in the upper part of the back are comprised of the costovertebral and costotransverse joints located in the back of the vertebrae. They provide you with stability to the chest wall and the upper back. Ligaments support the joints, which provide you with strength to the bone junctions and limit joint movement in the upper part of the back.



Costovertebral joint injuries usually present as acute inflammation and pin-point pain around the shoulder blade. Most commonly the pain is between the spine and the shoulder blade, but can occur anywhere along the upper back (just lateral to the spine).



How to Treat Costovertebral Joint Disorders:

1. Chiropractic or Osteopathic Adjustments

Going to the chiropractor or osteopath for an adjustment tends to be one of the most common type of treatments used. Any disorders and dysfunctions that are related to the vertebral column can normally be treated with visits to the chiropractor. Plan on going for a short course of treatment from 2-6 sessions.

2. Active Release Techniques

When active release techniques can help to address any dysfunctions and injuries in the joint. Manual treatments are the gold standard for spinal and rib injuries. This treatment will help to correct the factors that caused the injury, which alters the biomechanics of the ribs, chest, neck, shoulders and spine. Without correcting the biomechanics using manual therapy, the injury will become more chronic and self-perpetuating.

3. Low-Level Laser Therapy

This form of therapy is quite an effective form of adjunctive therapy for reducing inflammation and pain. It also helps to speed the healing process thanks to biostimulation. LLLT is used during the costochondritis part of the injury for its stimulation of the cells and the costal-cartilage, which are both relatively slow to heal because they don't have proper blood supply. Once the costal-cartilage has already been affected, it is quite painful and takes an extended period of time to heal. There are instances where the injury won't heal properly.

Tips:

- Weight lifters and runners are often affected by the additional strain on the ligaments and muscles because the activity requires them to repetitively and forcefully exhale and inhale during exertion and moving heavy loads.
- Also sports that involve a lot of rotation such as throwing sports, racket sports, and golf can place a lot of strain through the costovertebral joints.
- Rib injuries can occur from forces that are generated by sneezing and coughing following a common cold infection, asthma and bronchitis.
- Poor posture from sitting for an extended period of time at a computer or desk causes costovertebral joint disorders.
- Maintaining proper posture will help support the muscles, tendons and ligaments that cause inflammation and joint damage.
- Some therapists will talk about "popping a rib" or "subluxing a rib" and this can refer to a costovertebral joint sprain or injury.