

What is Pectus Carinatum?

It is when the front of the chest wall, called the breastbone, sticks out. It is often called "pigeon breast".

It happens to both boys and girls. It happens more often to boys and when they are older, like middle school or high school. When their bones are done growing, the chest wall does not change any more.

What causes it?

No one is sure why pectus carinatum happens. It might be a genetic problem and can happen to people in the same family.

Some children with pectus carinatum can also have a curved spine.

Most children do not have symptoms. Some children may have trouble being active. This is because the part of the chest that sticks out can be swollen and sore. This may happen when a child grows fast.

How is pectus carinatum treated?

A brace that pushes on the breastbone can be used to treat pectus carinatum. Most often, the best time to start using the brace is around 13 to 14 years old. This is when the chest wall is still growing. The brace is worn for 16 to 22 hours each day. The chest wall can be fixed in about 6 months. The brace will still need to be worn for another 2 to 3 years for shorter times each day.

How does the brace work?

You will get a prescription for a brace and it will be made by an orthotics company. They will let you know what is covered by your insurance. The company that provides the brace will also tell you how to take care of it.

The brace is checked by a pediatric surgeon every 3 to 6 months. There are two kinds of braces.



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Static brace Photo courtesy of Hanger Orthotics.

Static brace has pads that push on the front and back of the chest. The pads are connected by a strap. The straps can be moved to change the amount of pressure. Children learn to move the straps and parents learn how to check them.



Dynamic brace Photo used with permission from Cureventions.

Dynamic brace puts pressure on the chest with a spring. This kind of brace may treat the problem faster.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.