Pectus Carinatum

What is Pectus Carinatum?

It is often called, “Pigeon Chest.” Pectus Carinatum is caused when your breast bone (sternum), the ribs, or both are sticking out. How it looks may vary from person to person. It may be on both sides of the chest, or it may just be on one side.

Is this an unusual condition?

Actually, it’s fairly common. Whether this is a new diagnosis for you, or you have known about it for a while, you are not the only person dealing with this. In fact, it is almost guaranteed that there are a few other people at your school who have this condition.

How is Pectus Carinatum diagnosed?

Most often, your doctor can diagnose Pectus Carinatum upon physical exam only. Sometimes, an x-ray may be taken to confirm diagnosis.

Other interesting facts:

- Pectus Carinatum does not usually interfere with the work of your heart and lungs.
- Typically, there are no symptoms. However, some individuals complain of occasional pain where the cartilage is overly developed. You may also have some pain during exercise and other occasions of deep or fast breathing.
• The cause is unknown. But it usually runs in the family and therefore may be inherited.
• Pectus Carinatum often develops a bit later in the teen years for boys than it does for girls.
• The condition may become more severe as you go through more growth spurts.

Treatment Options:

There are two options for treating Pectus Carinatum:

  o Wearing a brace.
  o Having surgery.

Wearing a brace:

The brace is used to help flatten the chest bones without surgery. A brace is often a very effective treatment when worn daily, as prescribed. During your teen years, the cartilage in your chest is very flexible and can be molded to reshape the appearance of your chest wall.

• You will be fitted for a brace by an Orthotist from Hanger Clinic. They will follow you routinely to ensure the brace continues to fit you appropriately and troubleshoot any issues.
• The brace can be worn while sleeping. You may wear it directly over the skin, or over a tight fitting tank top.
• When worn correctly, the brace is very effective in making the chest flatter.
• Wearing a brace helps you avoid surgery!

If your doctor decides you are a good candidate for bracing, this is the preferred way to treat your condition.

Having Surgery:

This option is typically offered to older teenagers or adult, since by those ages, the cartilage that connects the sternum and the ribs is not as flexible as it used to be.

You will need to meet the criteria for surgery, in order to being offered this option. Information you should know:

• There are risks involved with surgery such as bleeding and/or infections at the surgery site; infections in your lungs (pneumonia); or getting air or fluid in the chest (also known as pneumothorax).
• You will need to be in the hospital for up to 7 days.
• Surgery may be accomplished by a large incision on the front of the chest and removal of several cartilages, in addition to breaking the sternum or by placing metal bars to push the chest wall in. Your doctor will discuss different options with you and help you choose.
• There are many activity restrictions in the weeks following surgery.

**Do I have to be treated??**

✓ If you’re okay with the way your chest looks, and
✓ You don’t have symptoms that interfere with your daily activities,

Then you do not need to undergo bracing or surgery.

You might notice your chest begin to stick out more as you continue to grow. If you decide not to be treated now and you change your mind as the Pectus Carinatum becomes more noticeable, just call our office and schedule an appointment.