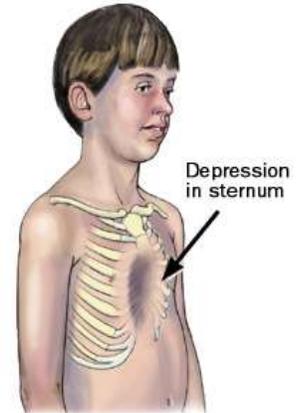


## Pectus Excavatum

### What is Pectus Excavatum?

Pectus Excavatum is when the rib cage does not develop as it should. The breastbone (sternum), which is in the center of the chest, is sunken or caved in. This sunken area, or depression, in the sternum is the pectus. It causes the rib cage to look unequal. Your child may have been born with pectus. The condition often gets worse as your child grows. It is sometimes called a **sunken chest** or just **pectus**.



### How is it treated?

A grading system is used to talk about the depth of the sunken chest.

It includes mild, moderate and severe pectus. Treatment is based on the depth of the pectus.

- **Mild pectus.** Exercise often helps by making the chest muscles stronger. This can help with better posture which may improve the appearance of your child's chest.
- **Moderate to severe pectus.** Surgery is often needed as the lungs and heart may be affected by the lack of space in the chest. Your child may have trouble breathing, get short of breath easily and complain of chest pain during exercise. During surgery the sternum is lifted upward. This is done with one of two procedures.
  - **Nuss procedure.** A steel bar is used to push out the sternum. The steel bar stays in your child's chest for 2 to 3 years. It is taken out during another surgery. The steel bar keeps the breastbone in a more normal position while your child grows.
  - **Ravitch procedure.** Abnormal cartilages are removed which allows the sternum to return to a more normal position. Sometimes a steel bar is left in place for about 6 months. Another surgery is needed to remove the bar.

### What tests will be needed?

- A special x-ray called a CT scan may be done. This creates a picture that the doctor uses to decide how to treat the pectus. It will also show if your child's heart and lungs are being affected by the pectus.
- Pulmonary function tests and/or an Echocardiogram may also be needed.

**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 teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.