Costochondral Cartilage Encyclopedia Article

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Costochondral Cartilage

Costochondral **cartilage** is the material that separates the bones within the rib cage. "Costo" means rib, "chondr" indicates cartilage. Also referred to as costal cartilage, it helps secure the ribs to the **sternum**.

The costal cartilages consist of 12 pairs of **hyaline cartilage**. The first seven pairs connect directly to the sternum, the next three are associated with the lower border of the preceding rib, and the final two end in the abdominal wall. Like the ribs, the costal cartilages vary in length, width and direction. The cartilage associated with the first rib is short and helps position the first costochondral joint close to the sternum. Cartilage length increases inferior (downward) toward the center of the rib cage, then decreases from ribs 7 to 12. The width and intervals between each cartilage diminishes from the first to the last. Direction of each paired cartilage is haphazard, the first descends slightly, the second is horizontal and the third slants upward. The remaining costal cartilages are angular.

Inflammation of the costochondral cartilage is a common condition marked by persistent chest wall **pain**. Symptoms are often mistaken for those associated with a **heart** attack.