

# Can You Get A Collapsed Lung From A Car Accident?

## Chest Trauma And Breathing Complications After Georgia Car Wrecks

A collapsed lung often feels like the air has been pulled out from the inside. [Crash victims](#) describe a sensation of tightness, like someone's pushing a heavy weight against their chest. Breathing becomes shallow. Pain grabs sharply around the ribs. Even small movements or deep breaths feel impossible.

At the [Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C.](#), our Georgia car accident lawyers see collapsed lung injuries far more often than most people realize. The chest is vulnerable during a collision because it sits at the intersection of [seatbelts](#), airbags, steering wheels, and door panels. When trauma strikes the torso, the space between the lung and chest wall can fill with air — a condition called pneumothorax — causing the lung to partially or fully collapse.

It doesn't matter if the crash looks minor or the damage seems limited. What matters is the internal force. Pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, and weakness can appear hours or even days later. That delay can make the injury easy to overlook, especially at first.

### What A Collapsed Lung Actually Is

A collapsed lung happens when air escapes into the cavity between the lung and chest wall. That trapped air pushes inward, shrinking the lung and limiting airflow. People often feel sudden tightening, racing heartbeat, or breathlessness.

In car accidents, the most common causes include rib fractures, chest wall bruising, blunt trauma to the torso, and pressure from seatbelts during impact. Even when ribs don't break, the force of the crash can bruise or tear lung tissue.

Pain doesn't define severity. Breathing difficulty does.

### Crash Forces That Damage The Chest

The body isn't built to absorb high-speed pressure from the side, front, or rear. During a collision, the chest becomes a focal point for energy transfer. That energy compresses, twists, and stretches the rib cage, which can push or tear lung tissue.

For example, a driver may lean forward before impact, turning slightly to check traffic. In that position, a seatbelt sits closer to the lung area than usual. The belt holds, the torso lunges forward, and the chest absorbs a sudden jolt. The lung doesn't need to rupture for air to leak. Pressure alone can do it.

### Signs And Symptoms People Tend To Miss

Collapsed lungs don't always start with dramatic pain or obvious distress. Sometimes symptoms build slowly, clouding the picture. That delayed onset is one reason these injuries are so dangerous.

Common red flags include:

- **Shortness of Breath That Feels Progressive:** Breathing becomes harder over time, not easier.
- **Chest Pain That Sharpens With Movement:** Pain builds during coughing, laughing, or deep breaths.
- **Dizziness or Lightheadedness:** Signs the body isn't getting enough oxygen.
- **Rapid Heartbeat or Fatigue:** The heart works harder to compensate for reduced lung function.

### **Why Collapsed Lungs Often Accompany Rib Fractures**

Ribs protect delicate tissue beneath them, but they're also fragile. When ribs fracture, the broken edge can irritate or puncture lung tissue. Even without a direct puncture, swelling around the rib cage limits movement and strains breathing.

It's not the size of the fracture that matters. It's the location. A small crack along the upper or side ribs can alter breathing mechanics and trigger a collapse. Most people don't realize how close the ribs sit to the lung surface — there's barely any space between bone and tissue.

That's why internal injury risk rises sharply when rib damage appears.

### **The Role Of Airbags And Seat Belts**

Airbags and seatbelts save lives, but they don't eliminate chest injury risk. In fact, they sometimes contribute to it. During a crash, the shoulder belt tightens instantly, anchoring the chest as the body lunges forward. That pressure forces the ribs inward, squeezing lung tissue behind them. Airbags add another layer of force, especially when the torso is turned slightly.

The result is sudden internal pressure that radiates through the rib cage, even when bones don't fracture. That compression can tear lung tissue and allow air to escape into the chest cavity.

### **Georgia Crash Patterns Behind Collapsed Lung Injuries**

Collapsed lung injuries are common on Georgia roads because of the forces involved in metro collisions. High-speed travel, multi-lane intersections, sudden stops, and rotational movement place intense stress on the chest.

They often show up in:

- **[T-Bone Collisions](#):** Sudden lateral impact compresses the rib cage against the door frame.

- [Rear-End Crashes](#): Whiplash motion pushes the torso forward, straining lung tissue.
- [Head-On Collisions](#): Airbag deployment and belt tension hit the chest at full force.

It doesn't take visible damage to trigger a collapse. A lung can fail quietly behind an intact rib cage.

### **When Symptoms Appear Days Later**

The body responds to trauma in waves. Adrenaline masks early signs. Inflammation builds slowly. Air leaks gradually.

That's why someone who feels tightness but can breathe fairly well after a crash may wake up days later struggling to inhale. What feels like simple soreness can evolve into something much more serious.

Pain is only part of the picture. Breathing motion reveals the truth.

### **The Emotional Weight Of Breathing Pain**

Breathing is automatic — until it isn't. When every inhale hurts or feels limited, fear rises quickly. Many people describe collapsed lung pain as strange, alarming, or unsettling, like the body is working against itself. Sleep becomes difficult. Activity drops. Anxiety grows each time the chest tightens.

Car accident injuries don't just change how the body moves. They change how people feel about their own safety.

### **How Our Attorneys Approach These Cases**

At the Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C., our attorneys look beyond surface details. We gather imaging records, symptom progressions, breathing reports, crash physics, and medical documentation that reflects how breathing issues develop. We don't rely on outward appearance or assumptions about pain level.

Collapsed lungs aren't minor injuries. They affect oxygen flow, stamina, work ability, and long-term health. Our firm understands how quickly these cases can escalate and how strongly insurance companies push back when symptoms don't show up immediately.

We're here for the people living through it, and the ones trying to breathe through every hour.

### **Georgia's Voice For the Injured**

If a car crash left you struggling with chest pain, shortness of breath, rib damage, or breathing instability, you don't have to face the recovery process alone. Our attorneys can guide you through the legal and medical challenges ahead, pursue justice, and help protect your future.

[Contact us today](#) to talk about your case and discuss the next steps toward securing the compensation you deserve.