

A clicking chest

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A 19-year-old male was referred to the acute medical unit by his GP with query pericarditis. He had a 1-day history of left-sided chest discomfort, with some associated breathlessness, which were both more noticeable on walking. He also reported a clicking sound during breathing which seemed to come from his sternum. He had no trauma, cough or fever and was otherwise fit and well. He was tall and lean but his clinical examination was normal, with no added heart sounds or pericardial rub, nor any evidence of the noise he had described; his chest was clear and he was mildly tender over the left pectoral area. Baseline bloods and electrocardiogram were normal. His chest X-ray (**Figure 1**) showed a small left apical pneumothorax.

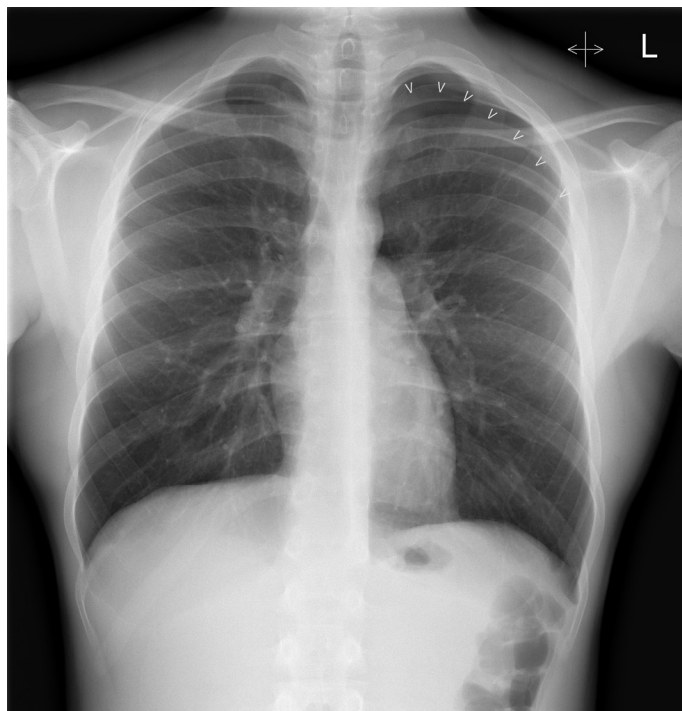


Figure 1. Chest X-ray illustrating a small left apical pneumothorax.

Hamman's sign (a clicking or crackling sound heard over the precordium) is more commonly described in pneumomediastinum but in this case, was caused by a small apical pneumothorax.

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