

ABOUT

Vertebral Compression Fractures



A **vertebral compression fracture (VCF)** is a condition that occurs when one or more of the 24 bones in your back, or vertebrae, collapse. The collapse, commonly caused by osteoporosis and trauma/tumor to a lesser extent, can lead to pain and limited mobility. When the fracture occurs as a result of osteoporosis, the vertebrae in the middle and lower spine are most often affected and the symptoms may become worse with walking.

With multiple fractures, your back may develop a forward curve, also called a dowager's hump. Pressure on the spinal cord may occur producing symptoms of numbness, tingling, or weakness.

In some patients, the fractures heal without treatment and the pain goes away. In more severe cases, the bone does not stabilize but continues to move, causing persistent pain that limits physical activities and reduces the overall quality of life.

Vertebroplasty and **kyphoplasty** are minimally invasive procedures performed by specialists including orthopedic and neurological surgeons, interventional radiologists, neuroradiologists, and pain management physicians. Under x-ray guidance, these specialists deliver synthetic materials into the fractured and collapsed vertebral body creating an internal cast that holds the vertebra in place. Kyphoplasty involves the additional step in which a balloon is inflated to create a cavity in the bone. Both procedures can often be performed on an outpatient basis with some patients reporting immediate pain relief. Most patients report that their pain is gone or significantly reduced within 48 hours. Many people resume normal daily activities within hours to days of the treatment.

