

Vertebroplasty/ Kyphoplasty

Patients with osteoporosis occasionally develop bone fractures without significant trauma. These fractures commonly involve the vertebral bodies and can be exquisitely painful in the spine. They can dramatically alter activity and quality of life.

Surgery is rarely an effective treatment for vertebral compression fractures due to the weakness of the surrounding bones. Potent medications can have side effects, typically in elderly population. Injections have only temporary benefit.

Fortunately, a new technique has been developed to stabilize the vertebral body fracture with direct injection of biological cement. This technique is usually outpatient and performed with sedation and local anesthesia. A fluoroscope (x-ray) is used to identify the fractured vertebrae and to guide the insertion of a needle into the bone. Rapidly curing cement is then injected to stabilize the fracture. This technique is termed *Vertebroplasty*.

In some cases, a balloon is used within the vertebrae to re-expand the collapsed vertebral body. The balloon is then removed and the cement is administered. This technique is termed *Kyphoplasty*.

Both procedures are demonstrated to provide good pain relief in a majority of selected patients. However, they have technical risks which should be discussed fully before the procedure is scheduled.