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Vertebral Compression Fracture

Vertebral compression fractures are common and can be very serious and painful. A vertebral compression fracture generally causes significant pain along the fracture site and is more common as bone density decreases (osteoporosis). A vertebral compression fracture is when a bone located in the spine collapses usually due to an excess of pressure, a hard fall, or any other type of physical injury. In patients with severe osteoporosis, even coughing may cause the fracture. At times however patients cannot recall any clear trauma or incident leading to the fracture.

The normal healthy spine will bend in order to withstand any amount of pressure. However, if the bone is much weaker, especially for patients with osteoporosis, the bone in the spine will fracture. The thoracic and lumbar spine are the most common sites of these fractures. The pain that is related to this injury varies by the number of vertebra involved and whether the fracture affects other parts of the spine such as the nerves and the spinal cord. The most common signs of a compression fracture are severe back pain over the fracture site. In some cases because of its proximity to the spinal cord and nerves, pain, numbness and/or weakness can be experienced in the arms and legs as well.

Vertebral Compression Fracture Treatment

Your pain physician will obtain a detailed history and physical to determine the appropriate course of treatment. Further imaging studies may be considered based on the findings.

Treating compression fractures may include the use of pain medications, decreased physical activity, and at times a back brace. Although pain medications do not heal the compression fracture, it can help reduce pain in the acute setting. More targeted therapies can be discussed if appropriate and may include epidural injections and in more severe cases referral for cement stabilization of the fracture (vertebroplasty/kyphoplasty).

Our highly trained Vertebral Compression Fracture pain physicians care about improving your pain and quality of life. For more information on how Pain Specialists of Orange County can help treat your Vertebral Compression Fracture, please contact us at 949-297-3838.