

# Kyphoplasty

If you're a woman over the age of 50, it's important that you don't make the mistake of ignoring your back pain. Even mild pain can indicate a spinal fracture ? especially if you have osteoporosis or other risk factors. Spinal fractures, if left untreated, can lead to a hunched back, also called Kyphosis. Kyphosis can limit your ability to perform simple activities and rob you of your independence and quality of life.

The good news is, you don't have to endure back pain?or the consequences of a spinal fracture. When caught early, spinal fractures can be repaired without surgery. The first step is to find out if you have any of the risk factors that make a spinal fracture more likely.

## What is a Spinal Fracture?

Conditions like osteoporosis weaken your bones. Sometimes the bones in your spine, also known as your vertebrae, get so weak that they fracture and collapse.

Spinal fractures can happen from something as dramatic as a fall, or from a simple movement like coughing or sneezing or reaching for something in a cupboard.

Unlike the pain from a broken arm or hip, the pain from a spinal fracture is not always severe?sometimes it is quite mild.

Most women think that backaches are just part of getting older. But if that backache has been caused by a spinal fracture, it can set the stage for more fractures, resulting in a hunched, deformed spine.

Once this happens, it can become harder to function day to day. You can't move as easily, clothing doesn't fit properly, and it becomes difficult to perform simple activities such as driving, bathing, cooking, and sleeping. As time goes on, you may have difficulty breathing and getting adequate amounts of food into your stomach. There can also be a great deal of pain and other medical problems.(Gold 2003)

You can find out your risk of having a spinal fracture by completing our [Risk Assessment](#)?a series of nine quick questions. It's important, because if you know your risk factors, you have a better chance of identifying pain in your back as a possible spinal fracture.

## Consequences of a Spinal Fracture

Spinal fractures are more common than people might realize. Most women associate a hunched back and deformed spine with the elderly and assume it is an inevitable result of aging.

Actually, it is a result of weak bones due to conditions like osteoporosis. Each time a bone fractures in your spine, it puts greater stress on the surrounding vertebrae. (Yuan 2004) Spinal fractures lead to more spinal fractures. (Lindsay 2001) After multiple fractures, a misaligned spine can no longer support itself correctly and begins to curve forward?creating a hunched back. (Gold 2003, Silverman 1992)

## Who's at Risk?

The risk of having a spinal fracture is greatest for postmenopausal woman over 55. Having osteoporosis, or a family history of osteoporosis, is one of the factors that puts you at greater risk. Height loss and low bone mineral density may also indicate an increased risk. In addition, lifestyle factors such as smoking, inactivity, or a diet low in calcium can increase the risk for spinal fractures.(National Osteoporosis Foundation)

If you have a spinal fracture or are at risk for fracture from osteoporosis, it is important that you also address the underlying condition of osteoporosis. Please talk to your doctor about how you can improve your bone health and reduce your risk for future fractures through a combination of medication, diet, exercise, and lifestyle modifications.

Get a better sense of your personal risk factors for spinal fracture by completing our [Risk Assessment](#).

## Balloon Kyphoplasty

If you have a spinal fracture, there are treatment options. Pain relievers (medication) can help relieve the discomfort caused by a spinal fracture, but they do nothing to address the fracture itself. In fact, treatment with pain relievers alone allows the bone to continue to fracture or to heal in a permanently deformed state.

**Balloon Kyphoplasty** is a minimally invasive treatment that can repair spinal fractures. It is an effective

and clinically proven procedure performed by a spine specialist. It takes about an hour to treat a fracture with Balloon Kyphoplasty and it can be performed as an inpatient or outpatient procedure under local or general anesthesia.

Only your doctor can diagnose spinal fractures and recommend treatment. Your doctor will help determine the best treatment option for you.

If your doctor recommends Balloon Kyphoplasty, it is best to have the procedure done as soon as possible. Balloon Kyphoplasty is designed to:

- Correct the spinal deformity caused by your fracture(Ledlie 2006)
- Significantly reduce pain with rapid relief(Garfin 2006)
- Return your day-to-day life to its usual pace(Garfin 2006)
- Help you stay strong, mobile, and independent(Garfin 2006)

## **The Procedure**

Through two 1-centimeter incisions in the back, two tiny balloons are inserted into the fracture bone and inflated. This is designed to realign the vertebra and correct the vertebral deformity caused by the fracture.

After the balloons are gently deflated and removed, the space inside the bone is filled with a special cement to set the bone, forming an internal cast. Most patients return to usual activity within a few days.

Although the complication rate with Balloon Kyphoplasty has been demonstrated to be low, as with most surgical procedures, there are risks associated with Balloon Kyphoplasty, rarely including serious complications. Consult with your doctor for a full discussion of risks.

## **The Results**

Best results for repairing a fracture with Balloon Kyphoplasty are achieved when the fracture is diagnosed and treated as early as possible. That's why it's important to know your risks and to be aware

of any new pain in your back. Start taking charge now by completing our [Risk Assessment](#).

[Click here to learn more about Spinal Fractures.](#)