

# SpineFAQs

## Kyphoplasty



Compression fractures of the spine are common...especially when they are caused by osteoporosis. Approximately 700,000 fractures of the spine are diagnosed each year in the United States.

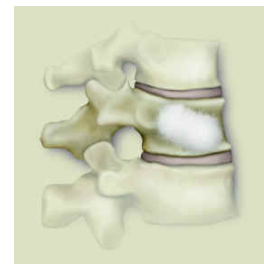
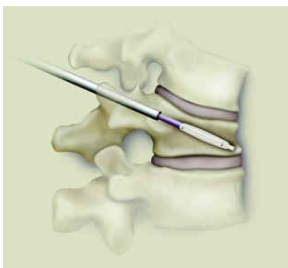
Traditionally, compression fractures of the spine due to osteoporosis and some types of tumors have been treated with bracing, pain medications and time. The pain from these fractures can be severe, and the time it takes to heal can be long...often as long as 6-12 months. In addition, the deformity caused by the fractures can lead to shortening of your height, decrease in your lung function, and increased stresses on the other bones which may lead to further fractures.

Kyphoplasty is a revolutionary technique developed to help alleviate the pain caused by new compression fractures of the spine. In addition, Kyphoplasty can help to restore the compressed bone back to a more normal shape, thereby reducing the chance of deformity and stress on the spine.

Kyphoplasty is minimally invasive, safe, and very effective. About 90% of patients treated with Kyphoplasty report significant reduction or elimination of their pain caused by the fracture. Dr. Stahlman has performed Kyphoplasty for over 500 fractures with excellent results.

### **How is Kyphoplasty performed?**

I will bring you to the operating room where general anesthesia will be



given. After positioning you onto your belly, we bring in a special X-Ray machine that allows us to see the broken bones in your spine. Small ¼ inch incisions are made on each side of the bone and small tubes (about the size

of a drinking straw) are inserted into the broken bone. Once placed correctly, a catheter tube with a balloon on the end is placed into the bone and the balloon is inflated. This not only makes a cavity in the bone, but is what helps to restore the shape of the bone. The balloon is deflated and removed, and bone cement (Polymethylmethacrylate – the same material we glue hip replacements in with) is used to fill the void left from the bone. The cement hardens in about 10 minutes and a single stitch under the skin is used to close the wounds. A small bandage is all that is needed. You are then awakened and taken to the recovery room. The whole process takes only 30 minutes or less for a single fracture. We can do more than one fracture if needed.

### **What happens after surgery?**

While it is common to be a little sore, most patients report that their previous back pain is much improved. After surgery, you can go back to any activity that you feel comfortable doing. No restrictions...just let your body tell you when to limit yourself. You can remove the dressing 5 days after surgery. The tape strips on the wounds will fall off on their own.

### **What are the risks of Kyphoplasty?**

As long as you are healthy enough to undergo general anesthesia, there are very few risks to surgery. Here are the most common risks of Kyphoplasty:

- 1) The risk of infection is VERY rare...usually much less than 1 in 100 patients.
- 2) While there is a theoretical risk of damage to the nerves, spinal chord and paralysis this is EXTREMELY RARE.
- 3) There is a small chance that the cement can leak out into the tissues around the bone, into the disc or into the bloodstream. The X-ray machine helps us to prevent that from happening.
- 4) Since your bones are all affected by osteoporosis, it is possible to fracture a different bone at some point in the future.
- 5) While rare, it is possible to crack a rib or your sternum during the procedure due to the fragility of your bones.