

# Vertebral Body Augmentation

## A patient's guide



### Vertebral Compression Fractures

For millions of Americans back pain is a daily fact of life. But for many patients, it doesn't have to be, thanks to an outpatient procedure called Vertebral Body Augmentation (VBA). Also called vertebroplasty or kyphoplasty, VBA has been shown in many patients to relieve pain, increase mobility, and improve quality of life.

#### Causes

Most people blame aging as the cause of back pain. But for more than 700,000 women and men, the true cause is vertebral compression fractures (VCFs) due to osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis, meaning "porous bones," is a gradual disease that slowly extracts calcium and minerals from your bones. Over time, bones can weaken to such an extent that even minor strains to the spine like tripping, opening a window, or bending over can cause a spinal fracture. VCFs are a hallmark of osteoporosis, limiting daily activities and compromising quality of life.



Normal Bone



Osteoporotic Bone

#### Treatment Options

Conservation therapy for vertebral compression fractures includes bed rest, pain medication, muscle relaxants, external backbraces, and physical therapy. If there is little or no pain relief, your doctor may recommend vertebral body augmentation.

This minimally invasive procedure is done on an outpatient basis and usually requires only local anesthetic and mild sedation, eliminating many of the complications that result from open surgery. For many patients, vertebral body augmentation results in enhanced procedural efficiency and is covered by Medicare and most private insurers.

Vertebral body augmentation allows you to resume many of the physical activities that you love. Best of all, it alleviates pain in approximately 90 percent of patients.

#### Symptoms

It is not uncommon to be unaware that you have fractured vertebrae. That's because in some cases, a VCF can occur with no pain at all. Typically however, VCFs are indicated by one or more of the following symptoms:

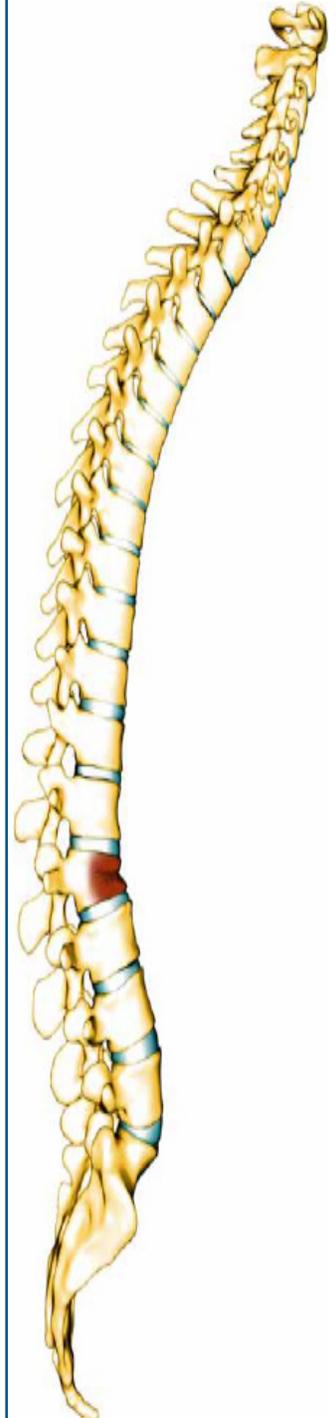
- Sudden onset of back pain
- Back pain that worsens when standing or walking
- Limited spinal mobility
- Height loss, deformity, and/or disability

#### Consequences

Often, VCFs are followed by sharp back pain and may lead to chronic pain, kyphosis or dowager's hump, loss of height, and declining health. This progression is often referred to as the "downward spiral." Since one fracture can lead to another, it is important that VCFs be diagnosed and treated early.

#### Potential Benefits:

- Rapid and sustained pain relief
- Increased mobility
- Improved quality of life
- Low complication rate



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## Before Your Procedure

Your doctor will do a physical exam and order X-rays and/or other imaging tests such as an MRI, CT, or bone scan. These tests help to determine the location of the fractured vertebra, how recently it occurred and whether or not vertebral augmentation is the most appropriate treatment. If you are pregnant, please tell your doctor before undergoing a vertebral body augmentation.

## During Your Procedure

Generally, vertebral body augmentation is performed while you are awake but sedated. Your back is numbed by a local anesthetic. Using X-ray guidance, a balloon is inserted into the fractured vertebra through a small incision. The balloon is then inflated, creating a void or cavity. Once the void is established, the balloon is deflated and removed. The void is then filled with bone cement to stabilize the fracture. As it hardens, the cement forms an internal cast that holds the vertebra in place. The incision is covered with a bandage. During balloon inflation and removal, complications may occur. These include embolism of fat, thrombus, or other materials; retro-pulsed vertebral fragments; pneumothorax, or pedicle fracture.

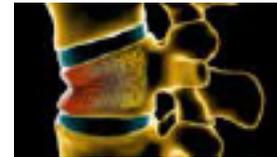
## After your procedure

After the procedure, you'll lie on your back for a short period of time while the cement continues to harden. Your vital signs will be monitored. Typically, patients are able to go home within a few hours of treatment. If you have any signs of wound infection, bleeding, or hematoma, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

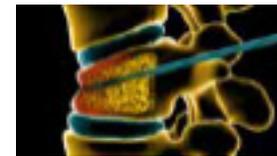
**Meet Lucille.** Lucille is a Vertebral Body Augmentation patient of Radiology Ltd. To watch a video explaining the process of the procedure and her thoughts, go to our website [www.radltd.com](http://www.radltd.com). Click on her picture towards the bottom of the main page.



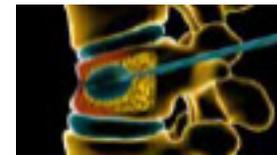
## How the Procedure Works



A vertebral compression fracture



Under X-ray guidance, a balloon is inserted into the fractured vertebra



Balloon is inflated, creating a void



Balloon is deflated and removed



Void is filled with bone cement, forming an internal cast



Stabilized vertebral body, relieves pain within a week of the procedure

For more information or to schedule an exam, please contact Centralized Scheduling at (520) 733-7226 or visit our website at [www.radltd.com](http://www.radltd.com).

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