

How is the procedure performed?

The procedure is generally performed in a radiology suite in a hospital or in some cases at an outpatient treatment facility. A local anesthetic is used to numb the area and prevent pain and a light sedative may be administered to increase patient comfort during the procedure. Occasionally, some patients do require general anesthesia. Through a small incision and guided by fluoroscopy and/or x-ray techniques, a hollow needle is passed through the spinal muscle until its tip is precisely positioned within the collapsed vertebral body. Acrylic bone cement is then injected through the hollow needle into the vertebral body. As the cement hardens it stabilizes the fracture by filling the spaces within the damaged bone.

What are the benefits?

While pain relief may not be immediate, most patients display a significant level of pain relief within 24 hours following the procedure. After just a few weeks, many patients are able to significantly lower their doses of pain medication and may even become symptom free. In addition, 75% of patients regain lost mobility and become more active, which helps combat osteoporosis.

What are the possible risks and complications?

Even with a minimally invasive procedure there are potential risks and complications of which you should be aware. Complications are rare but these should be discussed with your doctor.

What to expect before the procedure

Prior to the procedure you must be clinically evaluated by your health care provider. A medical evaluation will include a physical exam and diagnostic tests such as x-rays, MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) and bone scans. The diagnostic tests will be reviewed to diagnose and locate the fractured vertebral body and determine if the procedure is right for you.

What to expect during the procedure

Throughout the procedure, you will be lying face down on your stomach. Sedation medications will assist in keeping you calm and minimize any discomfort you might feel during the procedure. During the procedure, you will be drowsy and may or may not be conscious of what is occurring in the room. The doctor may ask you questions and talk with you during the procedure. The procedure can take from 1-2 hours depending on how many vertebrae are treated.

What to expect after the procedure

When the procedure is complete, you will be required to remain for observation for several hours. Typically, patients are then released to go home and can resume normal activities in 24 to 48 hours. In most cases, significant or complete pain relief is reported within 48 hours. Patients may experience some discomfort or bruising where the needle was inserted.

Facts About Osteoporosis

- One in two women and one in four men over age 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in her/his remaining lifetime
- Osteoporosis is responsible for more than 1.5 million fractures annually, 700,000 of which are vertebral compression fractures
- 80% of those affected by osteoporosis are women. 20% of those affected by osteoporosis are men

