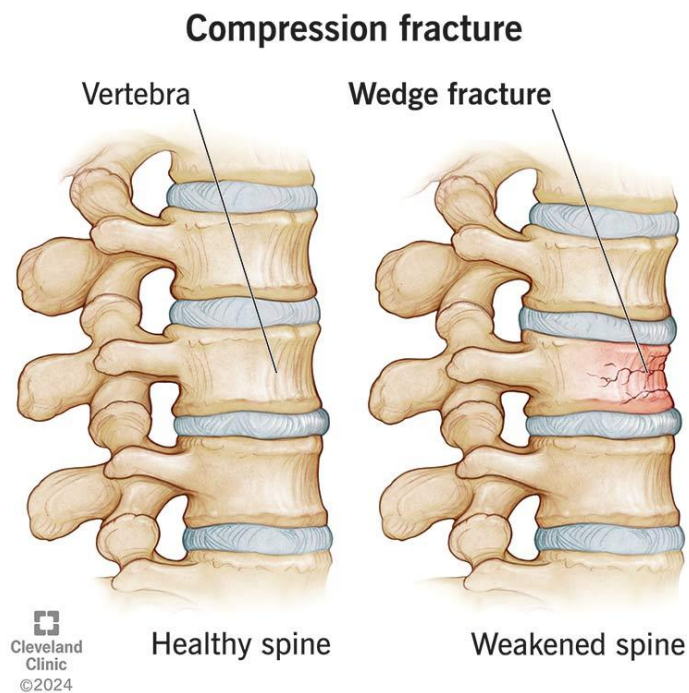


Vertébral Compression Fracture (VCF)



What is a Vertebral Compression Fracture?

A vertebral compression fracture occurs when one of the bones in your spine (vertebra) collapses. This can cause:

- Sudden back pain
- Limited movement
- Changes in posture (hunched back)

VCFs are most common in the **middle (thoracic)** and **lower (lumbar)** spine. They can occur in older adults, especially with **osteoporosis**, or after trauma or certain diseases affecting the bone.

Causes

1. **Osteoporosis** – weakened bones fracture more easily.
 2. **Trauma** – falls, sports injuries, or accidents.
 3. **Cancer** – cancer in or spreading to the bone can weaken vertebrae.
 4. **Other bone disorders** – e.g., Paget's disease.
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Symptoms

- Sudden or worsening back pain, often in the middle or lower spine
- Pain increases when standing or walking, eases when lying down
- Reduced height over time
- Stooped or hunched posture (kyphosis)
- Rarely: numbness, tingling, or weakness in legs

Note: Seek urgent care if you experience weakness, numbness, or loss of bladder/bowel control.

Diagnosis

Your doctor may recommend:

- **X-rays** – to confirm fracture location
 - **MRI** – to see soft tissues and estimate fracture age
 - **CT scan** – detailed bone images if needed
 - **Bone density scan (DEXA)** – if osteoporosis is suspected
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Treatment Options

1. Pain Relief

- **Paracetamol** or **NSAIDs** for mild pain
- **Stronger pain medication** may be prescribed for severe pain
- **Muscle relaxants** if muscles are tight or spasm

2. Physical Therapy

- Gentle exercises to strengthen back muscles
- Guidance on posture and safe movements
- Walking or mobility aids if necessary

3. Bracing

- Short-term use of a spinal brace may help support healing and reduce pain

4. Procedures

- **Vertebroplasty** or **Kyphoplasty**: minimally invasive procedures to stabilize the fracture if pain persists

Lifestyle and Self-Care

- **Posture:** Maintain upright posture, avoid slouching
- **Activity:** Avoid heavy lifting and twisting; gentle exercise like walking or swimming
- **Diet:** Ensure adequate calcium and vitamin D
- **Bone health:** Quit smoking, limit alcohol
- **Fall prevention:** Keep home safe to avoid future fractures

Recovery and Outlook

- Pain usually improves within **6–12 weeks**
- Most people regain mobility with physiotherapy
- Early treatment reduces risk of further fractures
- Osteoporosis treatment helps prevent future fractures

Remember: recovery takes time. Avoid rushing activities that may risk another fracture.

When to Seek Urgent Medical Help

- Numbness, tingling, or weakness in legs
 - Loss of bladder or bowel control
 - Severe, unrelenting back pain not eased by medication
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Summary / Key Points

- VCFs are common, especially in older adults with osteoporosis
- Main symptoms: back pain, posture changes, reduced mobility
- Treatment includes pain management, physiotherapy, braces, and sometimes procedures
- Lifestyle changes are important to prevent further fractures