

# Vertebroplasty

## PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

Vertebroplasty has the advantage of achieving both rapid pain relief and restoring bone strength, with many studies showing that up to 90% of patients become completely painfree two to three days post procedure. Over several weeks, patients can expect a marked decrease in their doses of pain medications, and can expect to increase mobility and activity levels. Vertebroplasty **cannot** correct curvature of the spine caused by osteoporosis, but **may** help to prevent further deterioration. The procedure treats only the acutely fractured vertebra and does not prevent future compression fractures. This procedure is best done within 6 weeks of the fracture.

### What is Vertebroplasty?

Vertebroplasty is a nonsurgical therapy performed under fluoroscopy to strengthen damaged vertebra.

### Medications

If you are on anti-coagulant medications such as **Warfarin** you must ring us at least one week before your vertebroplasty to discuss stopping the Warfarin. The vertebroplasty may be cancelled if you keep taking Warfarin.

**Aspirins** and medications containing **Aspirin** such as **Cardiprin** or **Astrix** can be continued prior to the vertebroplasty.

A member of our nursing staff will usually contact you approximately 1 week prior to your appointment to give advice on medications and the procedure itself.

**Please bring a list of your current medications with you.**

### Preparation

The doctor performing the vertebroplasty will need to talk to you prior to the procedure to ensure you are suitable for the vertebroplasty and will need to ask you questions about your medical history.

It is essential that you have recent plain radiographs, CT and MRI. Some patients, in particular those with pacemakers, may need examination under fluoroscopy or a bone scan. A bone scan showing activity in the fracture is helpful for confirming the more recent fracture in a patient with multiple fractures over an extended period.

### When you come for the procedure

You will need to lie face down for approximately one hour. Our staff will

give you a light sedation and make you as comfortable as possible.

After using a local anaesthetic to numb the area, a needle will be directed into the fractured vertebrae, and then the cement is injected.

The longest part of the procedure is setting up the equipment and positioning the needle.

The actual injection of cement takes only 10 minutes.

We may need to obtain a CT scan after vertebroplasty to evaluate the distribution of cement.

### The Risks of Vertebroplasty

Vertebroplasty is safe and effective in most cases, the procedure should be performed only if a patient has back pain that significantly impairs mobility and quality of life.

Significant complications from vertebroplasty are rare. Vertebroplasty short term complication rates have been reported at less than 10%.

The doctor performing the vertebroplasty will explain the risks involved and answer any questions you may have.

**Potential complications** include bleeding, infection, and worsening of pain.

In patients with severe osteoporosis, rib or vertebral fractures can occur. Since the cement is injected as a liquid, it can leak out of the vertebral body into surrounding tissues and veins, which may lead to the nerve roots or the spinal cord being irritated or compressed. In very rare cases, the cement may leak into the lungs causing pulmonary embolism.

### After your Vertebroplasty

You will need to stay with us for one to two hours after the procedure to make sure there are no complications.

You **MUST** have someone else drive you home at the end of this observation time and be able to rest until the following morning. It is recommended that someone else be available during this time should you require any assistance.

If you live out of town it is recommended that you stay overnight in Canberra.

**If you are concerned with anything after your procedure please do not hesitate to call us on (02) 6203 2222.**



### Appointment

Please phone or SMS our friendly booking service on **1300 788 508** or request an appointment online [www.canberraimaging.com.au](http://www.canberraimaging.com.au)

### What to bring

Please bring the following items with you to your appointment:

- Your referral
- Any relevant films
- Medicare card
- Pension / Health Care card

### Your results

Your doctor will receive fast and convenient electronic access to your reports and images. Canberra Imaging Group strongly advise that you return to your referring doctor in order for your doctor to discuss your results with you.