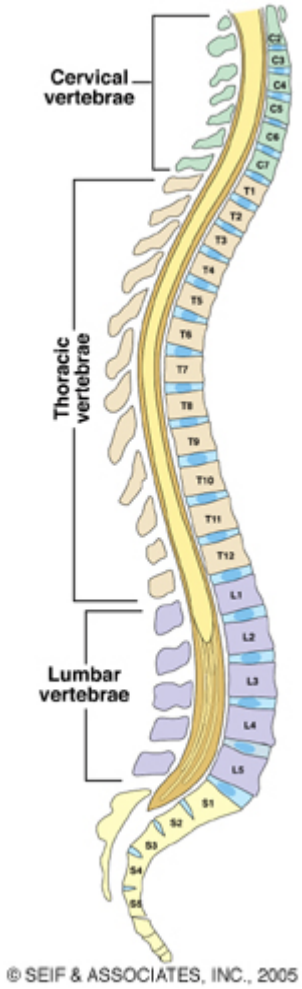
Fractured Vertebra

You have a fracture of one or more vertebra. These are the bony parts that form the spine. Minor vertebral fractures happen in older people when they fall. **Falls in the elderly usually do not cause a severe injury or damage the spinal cord. Osteoporosis is associated with many of these fractures.** Hospital care may not be necessary for minor compression fractures that are stable. However, multiple fractures of the spine or unstable injuries can cause severe pain and even damage the spinal cord. **A spinal cord injury may cause paralysis, numbness, or loss of normal bowel and bladder control.**

Normally there is pain and stiffness in the back for 3-6 weeks after a vertebral fracture. Bed rest for several days, pain medicine, and a slow return to activity is often the only treatment that is needed depending on the location of the fracture. Neck and back braces may be helpful in reducing pain and increasing mobility. When your pain allows, you should begin walking or swimming to help maintain your endurance. Exercises to improve motion and to strengthen the back may also be useful after the initial pain improves. **Treatment for osteoporosis may be essential for full recovery. This will help reduce your risk of vertebral fractures with a future fall.**



During the first few days after a spine fracture you may feel nauseated or vomit. If this is severe, hospital care with IV fluids will be needed.

Arrange for follow-up care as recommended to assure proper long-term care and prevention of further spine injury.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOU HAVE:

- Increasing pain, vomiting, or are unable to move around at all.
- Numbness, tingling, weakness, or paralysis of any part of your body.
- Loss of normal bowel or bladder control.
- Difficulty breathing, cough, fever, chest or abdominal pain.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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