

Advanced Orthopedic Institute at Ingalls

Vertebroplasty Offers New Hope to Patients with Spinal Compression Fractures

For many patients with osteoporosis, a spinal compression fracture can equal house arrest. Spinal fractures are very painful and often keep a patient confined in bed. Unfortunately, this is a quite common condition. In fact, a 50-year-old woman has nearly a 1 in 3 chance of suffering a spinal fracture during her lifetime.

"This painful condition literally robs many patients of their quality of life," says Richard Lichtenberg, M.D., an interventional radiologist on staff at Ingalls Memorial Hospital. "Traditional treatments for compression fractures include pain medication, back bracing and bed rest to treat the injury and relieve pain. But many patients do not find relief from these standard therapies."

But for certain patients, there is new hope. Ingalls now offers a state-of-the-art minimally invasive procedure called vertebroplasty that has been shown to have compelling results. Many spinal fractures heal successfully using traditional therapy, but new therapies such as vertebroplasty offer further options for patients with unrelieved fractures.

Vertebroplasty is a procedure that is performed by inserting a needle right through the skin. The needle is guided to the correct location in the crushed vertebrae by using special X-ray equipment. Acrylic bone cement, used in other bone and joint procedures, is injected into the fracture site. As it hardens, the cement stabilizes the fractured vertebrae. Dr. Lichtenberg and other interventional radiologists at Ingalls are performing vertebroplasty at Ingalls Tinley Park and Harvey outpatient surgery centers.

According to Dr. Lichtenberg, the benefits are many. "The success rate of this procedure is very high. Plus, the procedure itself is relatively short. Most patients only require local anesthesia, so that eliminates the concern of an older person having to undergo general anesthesia."

In fact, studies show that about 90 percent of people treated with vertebroplasty have complete or significant reduction of their pain. Most patients describe a significant level of pain relief after 24 hours. For many patients, this procedure frees them from a life confined to bed and gives back their life.

For more information about the X-Stop procedure available at Ingalls, call Ingalls Care Connection at 1.800.221.2199.