

Balloon Kyphoplasty Is Safe And Effective In Treating Painful Spinal Compression Fractures, Notes Northeast Ohio Orthopedic Surgeon Robert Berkowitz, MD

A recent international study found that balloon kyphoplasty, a minimally invasive surgical procedure for treating spinal compression fractures, improved patients' quality of life and reduced back pain and disability.

Sheffield Village, Ohio ([PRWEB](#)) January 21, 2010 -- According to a clinical study published in the November 2009 Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery, balloon kyphoplasty is a safe, effective early treatment for patients with acute spinal compression fractures compared with non-surgical care.

"If a patient is suffering from one or more painful compression fractures of the spine, [kyphoplasty](#) can restore the normal size and shape of the vertebra and instantly relieve most, if not all pain," says [Robert Berkowitz, MD](#), an orthopedic spine surgeon at the [Center for Orthopedics](#) in Sheffield Village, Ohio.

Spinal compression fractures can result from [osteoporosis](#) or a traumatic injury. "Osteoporosis can cause aging vertebral bones to change from being wood-like to being more like Styrofoam," Dr. Berkowitz explains. "A compression fracture occurs when one of these building blocks of the spine squashes down as if you'd stepped on a piece of Styrofoam."

"A compression fracture involves just the front part of the spine, causing the vertebra to take on a wedge shape. That's why compression fractures are also known as wedge fractures," says Dr. Berkowitz.

"Kyphoplasty involves inserting a needle into a vertebra collapsed by a compression fracture and inflating a tiny balloon to restore its normal height. This also creates a small hole in the vertebra. When the balloon is removed, cement is injected into the hole to stabilize the compression fracture," says Dr. Berkowitz.

"There is a similar procedure called vertebroplasty that was criticized in two studies published in the Aug. 6, 2009 New England Journal of Medicine," Dr. Berkowitz notes. "But kyphoplasty is a different type of surgery. Vertebroplasty simply involves inserting a needle into the vertebra and injecting cement. Because there is no balloon involved, vertebroplasty does not fix the deformity in the vertebra like kyphoplasty does."

Kyphoplasty can relieve the pain of compression fractures and offer patients a quick recovery. On a Monday night last October, 55-year-old Ralph from Oberlin, Ohio, fell off a ladder while cleaning out roof gutters. He landed on his back on the steps of the nearby deck.

"It was very painful," Ralph recalls. "I couldn't walk. I couldn't even sit. The only thing that made the pain somewhat tolerable is if I were lying down. I felt every bump on the way to the hospital."

X-rays and an MRI confirmed that Ralph had compression fractures in his spine. He underwent kyphoplasty on Wednesday afternoon, went home that night and was back at work on Friday.



"There was no pain," says Ralph. "I still had a few bumps and bruises from the fall, but as far as the surgery goes, that pain was totally gone. I didn't even need physical therapy."

"I saw the doctor again about a week and a half after my surgery," Ralph recalls. "He took an x-ray, showed me everything was looking good and told me I could go back to my normal activities."

"We do a kyphoplasty only for patients who have an acute injury with excruciating pain," Dr. Berkowitz notes. "In osteoporosis patients, a compression fracture can result from the most minimal trauma. One patient broke a vertebra while making her bed. Some people with osteoporosis break a vertebra when they sneeze."

"Many people have compression fractures, but they don't all hurt," Dr. Berkowitz explains. "Multiple wedge fractures are what cause some older people to lose height and develop a hunchback. But as long as there's no pain, there's no indication to do a kyphoplasty."

For more information on kyphoplasty, visit <http://www.center4orthopedics.com/procedures/kyphoplasty>. To schedule a consultation with Dr. Robert Berkowitz or any of the board-certified orthopedic surgeons at Northeast Ohio's Center for Orthopedics, call 440.329.2800.

The Center for Orthopedics, part of EMH Regional Healthcare System, offers the most comprehensive bone and joint care in Cleveland's west side, western Cuyahoga County and Lorain County, Ohio. Complete orthopedic care is available from an expert team of five advance-trained, board-certified orthopedic surgeons at offices in Sheffield Village, Oberlin and Westlake, Ohio. Call 440.329.2800 or visit www.center4orthopedics.com.

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