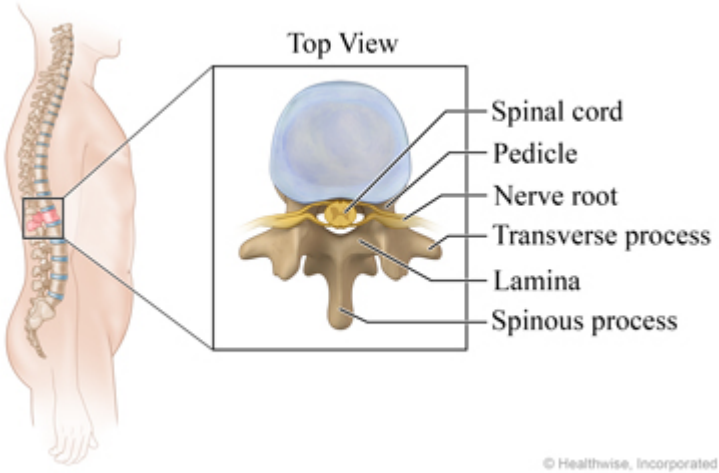
Spine Fracture: Care Instructions



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Overview

A spine fracture is a break in one of the bones (vertebrae) in your spine. The body of the vertebra, which bears the weight, can break. It has smaller bones that branch off to form a protective ring around the spinal cord. These bones, which can also break, include:

- The spinous process, which sticks out behind the vertebra.
- The transverse processes, which stick out from the sides.
- The pedicles, which connect the processes to the vertebral body.
- The lamina, which connects the processes to each other.

A spine fracture can damage the spinal cord or a nerve root. The nerve root is the part of a nerve that leads from the spinal cord to the rest of the body. Your doctor will give you specific information about your type of break.

You may be sent home with a brace to help your back heal. You can help your spine heal with care at home.

You heal best when you take good care of yourself. Eat a variety of healthy foods, and don't smoke.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Follow your doctor's instructions for bed rest and activity. If you have a brace, wear it as directed. Do not stop wearing it until your doctor tells you to stop.
- Do any exercises that you are given to keep your muscles strong and reduce stiffness.
- Be safe with medicines. Take pain medicines exactly as directed.

    - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
    - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- Put ice or a cold pack on the painful area for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Try to do this every 1 to 2 hours for the next 3 days (when you are awake). Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin or brace.
- Make sure that paths in your home are clear so that you do not fall. Also, make sure that lighting is good and that carpets are tacked down to prevent tripping.
- Do not drive unless your doctor says that it is okay. If you are allowed to drive, always wear a seat belt.
- Talk to your doctor about medicines or changes in your diet that can help make your bones stronger.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You cannot move an arm or a leg at all.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new or worse symptoms in your arms, legs, chest, belly, or buttocks. Symptoms may include:
    - Numbness or tingling.
    - Weakness.
    - Pain.
- You lose bladder or bowel control.
- You have belly pain, bloating, vomiting, or nausea.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You have a fever, lose weight, or don't feel well.
- You are not getting better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to https://www.healthwise.net/patiented

Enter **R964** in the search box to learn more about **"Spine Fracture: Care Instructions".**

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