

Diagnostic Imaging



Information about  
**Having a Vertebroplasty**



## **What is a Vertebroplasty?**

A Vertebroplasty is a way of relieving back pain probably caused by the partial collapse of one or more of your spinal vertebra. It involves injecting a small amount of special bone cement into the vertebra, to support the weakened bone. The aim is to relieve the pain and prevent further collapse.

More than one vertebra may require treatment.

## **Who will do it?**

A specially trained doctor called a Radiologist.

## **Where will it be done?**

This is usually in a screening room in the x-ray department.

## **When can I discuss the procedure?**

You can discuss this with your referring doctor at the clinic or in the ward, and also with the Radiologist before the procedure.

## **Consent**

We will ask you to sign a consent form before the procedure. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have. When signing the form you should know what we plan to do, alternative treatments, and any risks or complication of the procedure.

## **What preparation is required before the procedure?**

We may admit you to a ward before the procedure. You cannot eat for 6 hours before the procedure but you may drink small amounts of clear fluid up to 2 hours before the procedure.

You will need to undress and wear a hospital gown.

## **What happens during the procedure?**

This is a sterile procedure. Usually you will lie on your stomach on the x-ray table.

We will give you a local anaesthetic, sedative and, or painkillers through a needle in your arm. We will monitor your vital signs (blood pressure, pulse, oxygen levels). You may need oxygen.

We will clean the area over your back with antiseptic solution and then inject a local anaesthetic into the skin and at a deeper level close to the vertebra. There may be some slight discomfort when we inject the local anaesthetic. This will not last long.

The radiologist will use the x-ray equipment to guide a special needle into the spine. Once the needle is in the correct place the Radiologist will inject the bone cement and monitor it via the x ray machine. Occasionally you may experience some discomfort; we will give you pain killers to relieve any discomfort.

## **How long will it take?**

This can vary for a number of reasons. However you can expect to be in the x-ray department for between 1-3 hours. This will depend on the number of vertebra being cemented.

## **What happens afterwards?**

You will return to your ward and bed rest for 2 hours. We will monitor your vital signs (blood pressure, pulse etc). You may be able to go home on the same day, or you may be kept overnight. The Radiologist will arrange a follow up appointment to review the treatment.

## **Are there any risks?**

This is a safe procedure but as with any medical treatment some risks and complication can arise. These are rare.

The main complication is the leakage of the bone cement into the spinal cord which could cause damage to the spinal cord which may involve emergency treatment.

If the bone cement is too runny it can spill into the vein and travel to the lungs causing a pulmonary embolus and can cause breathing problems. To reduce this happening we inject the cement carefully and monitor it using the special x-ray equipment.

**If you have any questions please telephone the number on your appointment card.**

