

Compression Fracture

TERMINOLOGY

- Vertebral compression fractures
- Burst fracture
- Vertebral body collapse

INTRODUCTION

A compression fracture refers to the loss of bone integrity and the subsequent loss of vertical height of one or more spinal vertebrae. One of the most unstable types of compression fracture is the burst fracture. This usually occurs as the result of trauma. Compression fractures represent the most common type of fracture affecting the spine. A compression fracture may occur if bone is unable to withstand excessive stress or if the bone is thin and unable to sustain a normal load. The most common cause of a spinal compression fracture is osteoporosis, a condition characterized by progressive thinning of bone. Cancer weakens bones and makes them more susceptible to fracture.

PREVALENCE

Approximately 700,000 cases of compression fractures occur each year in the United States due to osteoporosis.