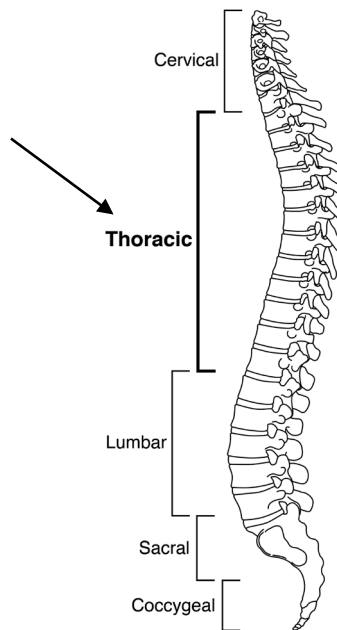


Thoracic Spine Injury

What is the thoracic spine?

The thoracic spine (T-spine) is in the upper to mid back. It connects to the ribs that protect vital organs. It is made up of 12 vertebrae which are the bones that surround the spinal cord. There are disks between each vertebrae.



What is a thoracic spine injury?

A thoracic spine injury can happen when a great amount of force is placed against the spinal column. An injury can happen if the spinal column is not strong enough to stand up to that force. Injury can occur to the vertebrae, the disks, or the cord. This can cause pain, numbness, weakness, and tingling. Symptoms vary in each person.

What tests will I need?

- X-rays look at the bones in your spine.
- A CT scan uses x-rays to get detailed pictures of bones and other tissues.
- A physical exam will check your spine to see if there is pain when pressure is applied or with movement.

How is it treated?

If you have an injury that needs treatment, you will see a spine doctor. This doctor will figure out the location and stability of the fracture. The doctor will decide if you need surgery. If you do not need surgery but you have a fracture, you may need to wear a brace. Your doctor will decide what type of brace and how long you will need to wear it.

What can I expect in the hospital?

If you need a brace, you will need to lie flat in bed to keep your spine aligned until you've had a brace placed. This can be uncomfortable, but you need to do this to protect your spine. To turn in bed, you must be rolled by the nursing staff. This is called "log rolling." It allows you to be turned while keeping your spine aligned.

You may not be able to eat until your doctor decides if you have a spine injury. This can take up to 24 hours. This is in case you need to go to surgery. If you need surgery you will not be allowed to eat. We will give you fluids through your IV to keep you hydrated.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 10/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6907