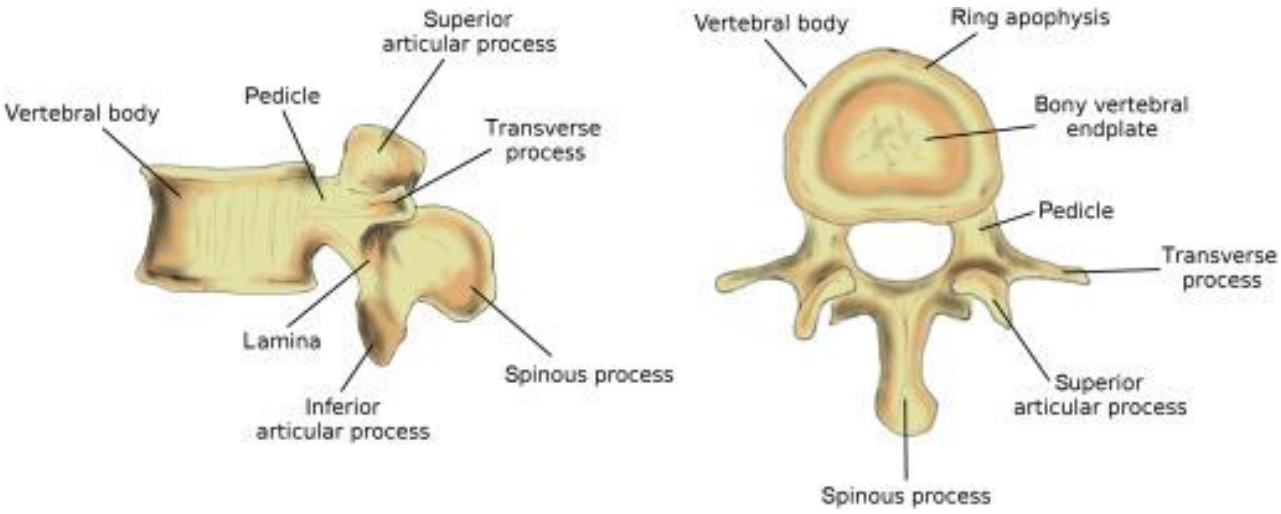
Lumbar vertebral body pain:

There are five lumbar vertebral bodies in the lower part of the human spine. Up to 20% of the population may have a “transitional vertebral body,” that fuses with the sacrum below or has some rudimentary ribs that make it look like the thoracic spine above. These are normal variants and should not cause concern. The vertebral bodies increase in size from top to bottom and they carry all the upper body's weight while providing flexibility and movement to the trunk region. They also protect the delicate spinal cord and nerves within the spinal canal.



The vertebral bodies receive a nerve supply and are thus susceptible to pain. Fortunately, boney vertebral body pain is much less common, then more typical causes of back pain (disc, facet joint), but when it occurs it needs to be recognized quickly and managed appropriately.

Trauma (falls and car accidents) are common causes of vertebral body fractures. Also, patients who have poor bone health from osteoporosis are at higher risk for compression fractures in the spine. Finally, patients with cancer can have tumor formation in the lumbar spine. A condition called multiple myeloma commonly involve the spine. Also, there are several types of cancers that can spread (i.e., metastasize) to the spine. **Lung, prostate, and breast cancers** are the three most common cancers that tend to spread to the spine. Laboratory and imaging workups are essential when primary spinal tumor or metastasis in the spine is found. If we find or suspect a tumor in your spine the clinicians at Buffalo Spine and Sports Medicine will work quickly to get this information to your primary care physician and oncologist (if you have one) so that your case is managed well from the start.

When there is a fracture of a vertebral body (from trauma or from disease such as cancer) sometimes we need to refer select patients to a specialist who can perform a procedure called vertebroplasty. This is a procedure that is done in an outpatient setting with light sedation. The physician puts a cannula in to the painful vertebral body and injects bone cement to quickly seal the fractured bone and stop the pain. The doctor can also biopsy the bone and send it for tissue analysis.