Michigan Quality Improvement Consortium Clinical Practice Guideline Update Alert

Guideline:  Management of Acute Low Back Pain in Adults
Released:  March 2022

This alert provides a summary of only the recommendations which were updated. Refer to the complete guideline for all recommendations and level of evidence.

Updated recommendations include:

Revised: “low back pain present for up to 6 weeks” to “low back pain of ≤ 4 weeks duration” based on most current guidelines from Up To Date.

Eligible population
- Change: from to “< 6 weeks duration” to “≤ 4 weeks duration”

Key Components
Red flags
- Added: Progressive and/or severe lower extremity neurologic deficits”.
- Deleted: “Acute dysesthesia or weakness of leg(s)”

Recommendation and Level of Evidence
“Testing/Assessment”
- Added: “red flags, recent falls”
- Added: “for acute non-traumatic back pain”

Therapy
- Added: to Heat for painful areas “may reduce pain due to muscle spasm”
- Added: qualifier “spinal” to manual therapy
- Added: “Modalities such as traction, ultrasound, paraspinal injections or TENS are not effective”

Referral
- Changed: “If persistent” to “If pain and/or disability persists beyond 2 weeks, consider referral for physical therapy…”
- Deleted: “not modalities such as traction, ultrasound” in referral section, was added to therapy section
- Revised: time frame from 6 to 4 weeks in sentence “If pain and/or disability persists beyond 4 weeks, consider referral to a multidisciplinary back pain program,…”

Identification and management
- Changed: “potential” to “suspected” serious pathology and
- Added: “based on red flags”

Cauda Equina
- Added “for emergent studies and definitive care”
Cancer
- Deleted phrase “male with diffuse osteoporosis”
- Revised: ESR/C reactive protein → C-reactive protein + ESR
- Deleted: “or CT” after “Consider MRI”

Infection
- Added: hemodialysis
- Added: endocarditis
- Revised: ESR/C reactive protein to C-reactive protein + ESR
- Deleted: “or CT” after “Consider MRI”

Spinal Fracture
- Added: “older age group” [esp. women age > 50]
- Deleted: “history of” before “recent injury or cumulative trauma”
- Deleted: “history of” and added “prolonged” to “steroid therapy”

**Updated referenced sources**