

Rule out red flag conditions for acute low back pain

Symptoms:

- Neurological: major motor weakness, disturbance of bowel or bladder control, saddle numbness
- Infection: fever, risk of UTI, IV drug use, immune suppressed
- Fracture: trauma, osteoporosis risk
- Tumor: history of cancer, weight loss, fever, pain worse supine or at night
- Inflammation: morning stiffness > 1 hour, Age: < 20 years or > 50 years

Adapted from: The Peterborough Back Rules chart template. G. Powell and The Peterborough Back Rules Working Group. September, 1997.

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Yellow flags for back pain

Factors that increase the risk of developing or perpetuating long-term disability and work loss:

- Belief that back pain is harmful or potentially severely disabling
- Fear and avoidance of activity or movement
- Tendency to low mood and withdrawal from social interaction
- Expectation of passive treatment(s) rather than a belief that active participation will help

Adapted from: *Guide to Assessing Psychosocial Yellow Flags in Acute Low Back Pain: Risk Factors for Long-Term Disability and Work Loss*. January 1997 edition.

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