

Priority Topic: **LOW BACK PAIN**

Key Features:

For a single source on this topic, pick one of these:

[Chronic Low Back Pain AAFP 2015](#)

[Low Back Pain AIM 2014](#)

1. In a patient with [undefined acute low-back pain](#) (LBP):

a) Rule out [serious causes](#) (e.g., cauda equina syndrome, pyelonephritis, ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysm, cancer) through appropriate [history and physical examination](#).

b) Make a [positive diagnosis of musculoskeletal pain](#) (not a diagnosis of exclusion) through an appropriate history and physical examination.

What you should study:

✓ [Low Back Pain AIM 2014](#)

✓ [EM Cases Episode 26: Low Back Pain Emergencies](#)

✓ [Chronic Low Back Pain Diagnosis and Management NATURE 2013](#)

****pay special attention to RED and YELLOW flags**

✓ [Diagnosis and Treatment of Acute LBP AAFP 2012](#)

2. In a patient with confirmed **mechanical low back pain**:

a) **Do not over-investigate** in the acute phase.

What you should study:

- ✓ **Low Back Pain AIM 2014**
- ✓ **Imaging Low Back Pain AAFP Choosing Wisely**

b) Advise the patient:

- that **symptoms can evolve**, and ensure **adequate follow-up care**.
- that the **prognosis is positive** (i.e., the overwhelming majority of cases will get better).

What you should study:

- ✓ **Mechanical Low Back Pain NATURE 2013**

3. In a patient with mechanical low back pain, whether it is acute or chronic, give **appropriate analgesia** and titrate it to the patient's pain.

What you should study:

- ✓ **Management of LBP AAFP 2017**
- ✓ **Flexeril for LBP AAFP 2016**
- ✓ **LBP Management Guideline Review 2017**
- ✓ **Treatments for Sciatica AAFP 2017**
- ✓ **Opioid vs Nonopioid Meds for LBP JAMA 2018**
- ✓ **Back pain and sciatica BMJ Infographic**

4. **Advise the patient** with mechanical low back pain to return if **new or progressive neurologic symptoms** develop.

- ✓ **Just do it!**

5. In all patients with mechanical low back pain, [discuss exercises and posture strategies](#) to prevent recurrences.

What you should study:

- ✓ [Low Back Pain AIM 2014](#)
- ✓ [Pilates for LBP AAFP 2017 Cochrane Summary](#)
- ✓ [Effects of Exercise and Physical Activity on LBP 2016](#)