### Spinal Red Flags

| Precautions | Low back red flags have poor test specificity  
>80% patients with mechanical low back pain have at least one red flag  
Evaluate red flags in the context of the clinical presentation as a whole  
Keep a high index of suspicion in high risk patients or where more than one red flag is present |
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| **Cancer** | Age >50yrs or <20yrs with NEW onset pain  
History of malignancy (however long ago)  
Pain worse at night or at rest (non-mechanical pain)  
Thoracic pain  
Unexplained weight loss >10kg in 6 months |
| **Fracture** | History of trauma  
Longstanding steroid use  
Osteoporosis  
Structural deformity |
| **Cauda Equina** | Saddle anaesthesia  
Reduced anal tone  
Urinary retention  
Bilateral leg pain  
Erectile dysfunction |
| **Cord Compression** | Back pain  
Leg weakness  
Limb numbness  
Ataxia  
Urinary retention (with overflow)  
Hyper-reflexia  
Extensor plantars  
Clonus |
| **Infection** | Fevers/Rigors  
General malaise  
Recent bacterial infection  
Immunocompromised  
Prior disc surgery or discography  
History i.v. drug misuse |

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