

Red, Yellow and Green Flags for Low Back Pain

Red Flags <i>for</i> <i>Serious Underlying Disease</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Patients younger than 20 or older than 55 experiencing back pain for the first time, or patients who experience pain that is significantly different from previous episodes• Pain that is constant over time, and does not disappear during sleep• General malaise and poor general condition• Traumatic injuries, tumors, or steroid use, improper use of immunosuppressant drugs• Neurological compromise• Spinal deformity• Pronounced morning stiffness that lasts more than one hour and/or high sedimentation rate
Yellow Flags <i>for</i> <i>Patients at Risk of Developing Chronic Pain</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pessimistic attitude toward pain, with excessive fear of movement and activity, and little hope for improvement• Work-related problems (dissatisfaction, conflicts)• Emotional problems (depression, anxiety, worry)• Generalized pain (headache, fatigue, dizziness)• Desire for passive treatment, little ability to be proactive• Previous episode(s) of low back pain that were followed for an extended period of time
Green Flags <i>for</i> <i>Good Prognosis and Rapid Spontaneous Recovery</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good general condition• Short duration of symptoms• No nerve root disease• Absence of yellow and red flags

Adapted from: Laerum E *et al.* *Tidsskr Nor Laegeforen* 2010; 130(22):2248-51.