Patterns of Low Back Pain
MSK Resource

Q1 - Where is your pain the worst?
Q2 - Is your pain constant or intermittent?

Q3 - Does bending forward make your typical pain worse?
Also determine patient's typical pain response
to extending backward

Q4 - Has there been a change in your bowel or bladder function
Q5 - What can't you do now that you could do before you were in pain and why?

Q6 - What are the relieving movements/positions?
Q7 - Have you had this same pain before?
Q8 - What treatment have you had before? Did it work?
Q9 - If age of onset<45, are you experiencing morning stiffness
in your back > 30 minutes?

Two Tests to Rule Out Red Flags

- Sphincter disturbance: bowel or bladder
- Non-mechanical pattern of pain
  - Disproportionate night pain
  - Wide spread neurological signs or symptoms
  - Thoracic dominant pain
- Constant pain
  - History of cancer
  - Unexplained weight loss
  - Fever
  - Recent or on-going infection
- Lack of treatment response
- Immunosuppression
- Intravenous drug use
- Palpation
  - Is more helpful in cases of suspected fracture, infection, tumour or pain disorder.

www.pspbc.ca

Red Flags

Practice Support Program

Doctors of BC
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