Management of Acute Low Back Pain

Initial Evaluation

Red Flags?

Yes

- Red Flag Protocol (see page 3)

No

- Radicular Pain?

Yes

- Radiculopathy CPG (see separate guideline)

No

Determine risk of developing chronic back pain:
- Assess Yellow Flags
- Keele STarT Back Screening Tool

Low Risk

Core Treatment Plan
- Reassess in 2-4 weeks

Moderate/High Risk

Core Treatment Plan, PLUS:
- Physical Therapist with clinician trained in addressing psychosocial issues
- Mental Health Screening /Psychology
- Consider Spine Center referral
- Reassess in 1-3 weeks

Core Treatment Plan:
- Education & Reassurance
- Encourage activity
- PT or Chiropractic Care

Core Treatment Plan, PLUS:
- Reassure & Address Psychosocial Factors
- Consider Spine Center Referral
- Consider Integrative Medicine Referral
- Reassess in 1-3 weeks

Continue Core Treatment Plan
- Encourage ongoing exercise
- Reassess in 4-6 weeks

Continue Core Treatment Plan, PLUS:
- Shared Decision Making:
  - Further workup (Imaging, Labs)
  - Medications
  - Spine Center Referral

Re-assessment

Improving?

Yes

- Self Management
  - Encourage fitness/activity program(s)
  - Or PT Home Program
  - Follow up as needed

No

End of Guideline

Evaluation Elements:
- History and Exam
- Review Red/Yellow Flags
- Pain Rating (VAS)
- Quality of Life instrument

End of Guideline

This Clinical Guideline is intended to guide most, but not all, encounters involving acute low back pain and should not replace clinical judgment; deviate from or adapt this guideline to meet the