

MRI and CT Scanning – Table 1

Clinical features	Procedures	Appropriateness Category
Acute, subacute, or chronic uncomplicated low back pain or radiculopathy without red flag symptoms* or prior treatment	Lumbar spine X-ray	Usually not appropriate
	Lumbar spine CT	Usually not appropriate
	Lumbar spine MRI	Usually not appropriate
	Lumbar spine CT myelography	Usually not appropriate
Acute, subacute, or chronic uncomplicated low back pain or radiculopathy <i>with one of the following</i> : low-velocity trauma, osteoporosis, elderly individual, or chronic steroid use	Lumbar spine X-ray	Usually appropriate
	Lumbar spine CT	Usually appropriate
	Lumbar spine MRI	Usually appropriate
	Lumbar spine CT myelography	Usually not appropriate
Acute, subacute, or chronic uncomplicated low back pain or radiculopathy <i>with one of the following</i> : candidate for surgery, candidate for axial injection, progressive neurologic symptoms, or persistent symptoms following 6 weeks of conservative treatment	Lumbar spine X-ray	May be appropriate
	Lumbar spine CT	May be appropriate
	Lumbar spine MRI	Usually appropriate
	Lumbar spine CT myelography	May be appropriate