

CHANGE PACKAGE: IMAGING FOR NONSPECIFIC LOW BACK PAIN

What are we trying to accomplish?

Physicians and other leaders in spine care have developed Choosing Wisely recommendations to help reduce unnecessary imaging for low back pain. Their goal is to reduce unnecessary imaging for low back pain in the absence of “[red flags](#).”

How can I use this change package?

You can use this change package to review your low back pain assessment and management practices and identify areas for improvement.

This package contains:

- Resources to get you started
- Sample indicators to track your progress
- Links to an online forum where you can connect with others working on this change idea

Getting started resources:

Choosing Wisely partners and others have developed several resources to help you get started with your local initiative and connect with others to find out how they are implementing their changes:

- [Practicing Wisely: Reducing Unnecessary Testing and Treatment](#): A Mainpro+ certified Continuing Professional Development program. This initiative of the Ontario College of Family Physicians aligns closely with the Choosing Wisely campaign to implement good healthcare stewardship and avoid over-medicalization. This hands-on, interactive program is comprised of four modules, each with a different area of focus. Participants will identify opportunities on how to "practice wisely," with a focus on reducing over-prescribing, over-imaging, over-screening and over-monitoring using the latest evidence and tools from diverse sources.

- [Quality Standard – Care for Adults with Acute Low Back Pain](#): This Quality Standard addresses care for those 16 years of age and older with acute low back pain, with or without leg symptoms. It examines the assessment, diagnosis, and management of people with this condition by health care professionals across all health care settings, but focuses largely on primary care. It provides guidance on reducing unnecessary diagnostic imaging and on both nonpharmacological and pharmacological therapies.
- [Clinically Organized Relevant Exam \(CORE\) Back Tool](#): Developed by the Centre for Effective Practice, this tool helps guide family physicians and/or nurse practitioners to recognize common mechanical back pain syndromes and screen for other conditions where management may include investigations, referrals, and specific medications.
- [Quorum](#): An online community dedicated to improving the quality of health care across Ontario. Find examples from other primary care practices working to reduce unnecessary imaging for low back pain.
- [Primary Care Quality Improvement Plans](#): A public commitment to meet quality improvement goals. Incorporating Choosing Wisely recommendations into your Quality Improvement Plan as a custom indicator will help align quality improvement efforts for more effective change.
- [Interprofessional Spine Assessment and Education Clinics](#): Provides program information and educational resources for providers and patients. Includes access to a required registration and onboarding module for primary care providers to enable referral of eligible patients to the MSK Rapid Access Clinics for Low Back Pain provincial program.

Suggested indicators:

Comparing low back pain management practices to best practices can contribute to reduced imaging in the absence of “[red flags](#)” and align with Choosing Wisely recommendations.

Indicators would need to be tailored to your specific site, but recommended potential indicators from Health Quality Ontario’s [Quality Standard for Low Back Pain](#) include:

- Percentage of people with acute low back pain who have surgeon or specialist consultations
- Percentage of people with acute low back pain who report an improvement in their quality of life
- Percentage of people with acute low back pain who rate their interaction with their health care professional as “definitely helping them feel better able to manage their low back pain” (response options: definitely, for the most part, somewhat, not at all)