

Clinical Guidelines for Low Back Pain: A critical review of consensus and inconsistencies across three major guidelines

Summary of Physical Therapy-related recommendations by Kelly Newman, SPT

**these are not all recommendations, just the ones that we thought were most relevant/interesting **

	NICE Guideline on Low Back Pain and Sciatica 2016	2007/2009/2017 Diagnosis and treatment of low back pain: a joint clinical practice guideline from the American College of Physicians and American Pain Society	2015 Evidence-Informed Primary Care Management of Low Back Pain- Canada	Notes
Consideration of potential alternative diagnoses, such as specific spinal pathologies	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	None of the guidelines provide notable detail on the best methods for screening
Early, routine imaging	Not recommended	Not recommended	Not recommended	Imaging is only recommended only if it is likely to change the management of the patient or when there is justifiable suspicion of a specific disease.
Electro diagnostic testing	Not considered	Not recommended by early guideline	Not recommended	
Advice to stay active and return to normal activity as soon as possible	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	
Education towards an “expected” course of LBP, in which the	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	Potentially to reduce the risk of fear/catastrophizing

probability of a rapid improvement in symptoms is high				and to moderate expectations
Use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for acute and chronic LBP	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	Acetaminophen is not recommended by NICE or updated US guidelines.
Cautious approach to opioids	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	All recommended against long term management of LBP with opioids. Short-term recommendations vary.
Some variation of exercise as therapy	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	None specified any form of exercise as superior. NICE places exercises as more of the central component of treatment
Spinal Traction	Not recommended	Not recommended	Not recommended	
Acupuncture	Not recommended	Recommended	Recommended as an adjunct treatment	
“Manual Therapy “	Recommended only as part of a treatment package that includes exercise; not an essential component	Recommended for acute LBP; no caveat for exercise therapy	Recommended for acute LBP; no caveat for exercise therapy	
Multi-modal care options (more than one type of intervention are incorporated, such as self-management principles and	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	Updated US and Canadian guidelines recommend multidisciplinary pain management programs for chronic LBP. NICE

psychological approaches)				recommended to consider combined psychological and physical rehab where a patient presents with significant psychological obstacles or previous treatment has not been effective.
TENS	Not recommended	Not recommended as sole treatment	Not recommended as sole treatment	
Back belts/corsets	Not recommended	Not recommended as sole treatment	Not recommended as sole treatment	

Differences in recommendations may occur for a variety of reasons ...