

# Back Pain



## History

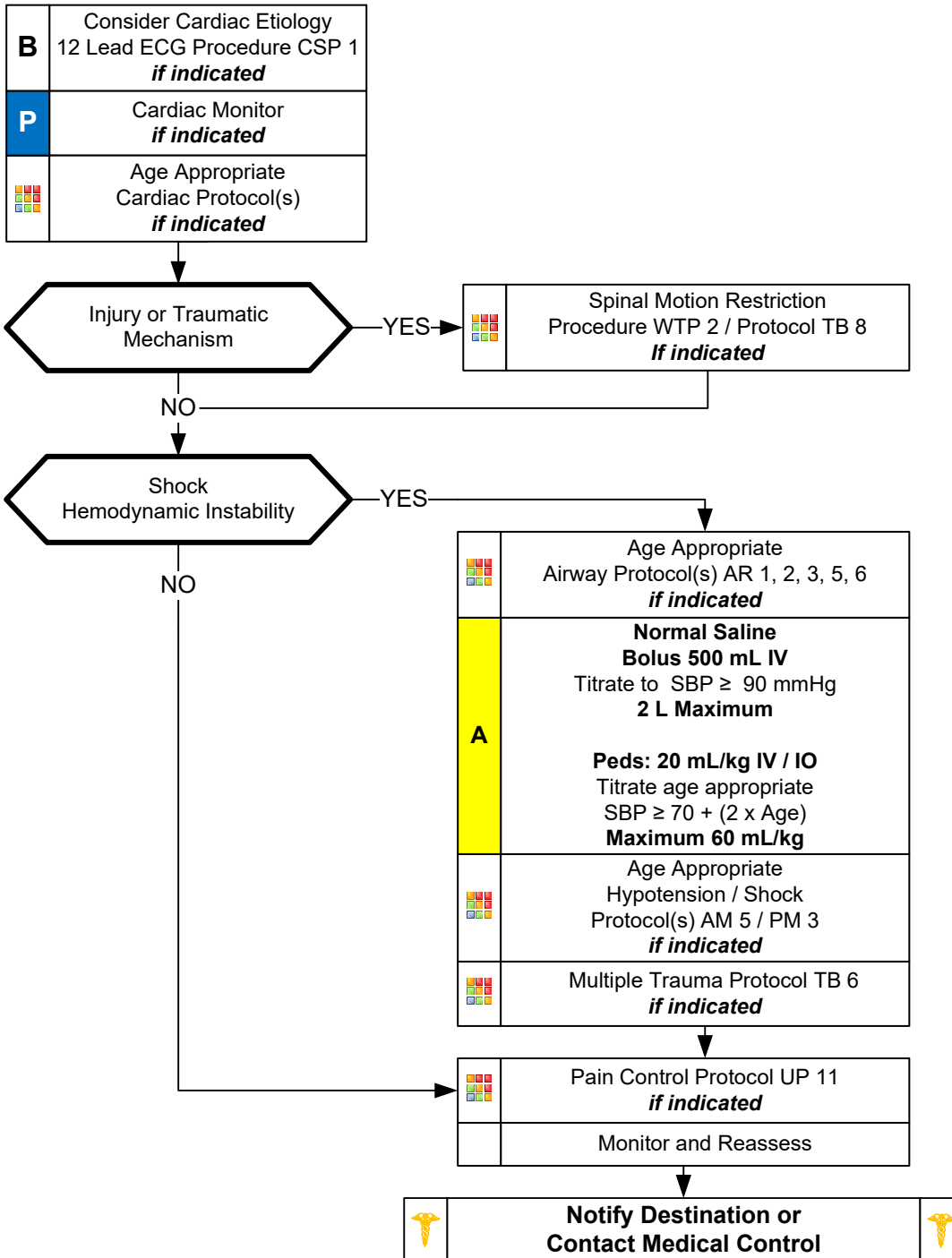
- \* Age
- \* Past medical history
- \* Past surgical history
- \* Medications
- \* Onset of pain / injury
- \* Previous back injury
- \* Traumatic mechanism
- \* Location of pain
- \* Fever
- \* Improvement or worsening with activity

## Signs and Symptoms

- \* Pain (paraspinous, spinous process)
- \* Swelling
- \* Pain with range of motion
- \* Extremity weakness
- \* Extremity numbness
- \* Shooting pain into an extremity
- \* Bowel / bladder dysfunction

## Differential

- \* Muscle spasm / strain
- \* Herniated disc with nerve compression
- \* Sciatica
- \* Spine fracture
- \* Kidney stone
- \* Pyelonephritis
- \* Aneurysm
- \* Pneumonia
- \* Spinal Epidural Abscess
- \* Metastatic Cancer
- \* AAA



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## Pearls

- \* **Recommended Exam: Mental Status, Heart, Lungs, Abdomen, Neuro, Lower extremity perfusion**
- \* **Back pain is one of the most common complaints in medicine and effects more than 90 % of adults at some point in their life. Back pain is also common in the pediatric population. Most often it is a benign process but in some circumstances can be life or limb threatening.**
- \* **Consider pregnancy or ectopic pregnancy with abdominal or back pain in women of childbearing age.**
- \* **Consider abdominal aortic aneurysm with abdominal pain especially in patients over 50 and/or patients with shock/ poor perfusion. Patients may have abdominal pain and / or lower extremity pain with diminished pulses. Notify receiving facility early with suspected abdominal aneurysm.**
- \* **Consider cardiac etiology in patients > 50, diabetics and / or women especially with upper abdominal complaints.**
- \* **Red Flags which may signal more serious process associated with back pain:**
  - Age > 50 or < 18
  - Neurological deficit (leg weakness, urinary retention, or bowel incontinence)
  - IV Drug use
  - Fever
  - History of cancer, either current or remote
  - Night time pain in pediatric patients
- \* **Cauda equina syndrome is where the terminal nerves of spinal cord are being compressed (Symptoms include):**
  - Saddle anesthesia
  - Recent onset of bladder and bowel dysfunction. (Urine retention and bowel incontinence)
  - Severe or progressive neurological deficit in the lower extremity.
  - Motor weakness of thigh muscles or foot drop
- \* **Back pain associated with infection:**
  - Fever / chills.
  - IV Drug user (consider spinal epidural abscess)
  - Recent bacterial infection like pneumonia.
  - Immune suppression such as HIV or patients on chronic steroids like prednisone.
  - Meningitis.
- \* **Spinal motion restriction in patients with underlying spinal deformity should be maintained in their functional position.**
- \* **Kidney stones typically present with an acute onset of flank pain which radiates around to the groin area.**