



The Royal College of
Chiropractors

Chiropractic Quality Standard

Acute Low Back Pain

- 1. Waiting Times:** On contacting a chiropractic clinic, patients seeking care for uncomplicated acute low back pain are offered an appointment within three working days.
- 2. History and Examination:** Patients presenting with suspected acute low back pain are assessed on the basis of a full history and the findings of a clinical examination, which includes an assessment of the neurology of the lower limb.
- 3. Diagnostic Imaging:** Patients with acute low back do not normally require diagnostic imaging tests (including x-rays, CT or MRI).
- 4. Patient Explanations:** Patients with acute low back pain are given an explanation of their condition, the likely causal factors, details of any proposed treatment, and the expected prognosis.
- 5. Informed Consent:** Patients with acute low back pain are asked to consent to treatment after they have received an explanation of the risks and benefits of treatment, the likely outcomes with and without treatment, and alternative treatment options.
- 6. Management Plan:** Patients with acute low back pain are recommended a plan of care only after their personal goals and expectations have been considered. The plan of care includes a formal review within two weeks of the commencement of treatment.
- 7. Treatment Aims:** The aims of treatment for patients with acute low back pain are to reduce symptoms and disability, and to maximise function, subject to the patients' personal expectations and preferences.
- 8. Package of Care:** Patients with acute low back pain are treated with a package of care, including advice on activity and lifestyle, manipulation and/or mobilisation, soft tissue therapies, and psychosocial intervention aimed at resolving cognitive barriers to recovery.
- 9. Early Monitoring:** Patients with acute low back pain whose symptoms are either progressing or very severe are assessed at least twice a week.
- 10. Advice on Activity:** As part of their treatment plan, patients with acute low back pain are given advice and encouragement to remain as active as possible and, where appropriate, to continue normal daily activities including work.
- 11. GP Reports:** Subject to receiving consent, one or more reports are sent to the GP of patients with acute low back pain detailing their presentation, diagnosis and response to treatment.
- 12. Referrals:** Patients with acute low back pain are referred if their condition shows no sign of improvement, or worsens over a four week period, if not before.
- 13. Discharge from Acute Care:** Patients with acute low back pain are discharged from acute care within four weeks of their signs and symptoms being absent.
- 14. Prophylactic Care:** Ongoing rehabilitation and prophylactic care is offered to patients following discharge from treatment for acute low back pain.

Scope of this Quality Standard

This quality standard covers the chiropractic management of patients with simple, non-specific, mechanical low back pain of less than 6 weeks in duration that is not attributable to specific pathology.

Non-specific mechanical low back pain encompasses a large number of different onsets, presentations, and sources of pain. These quality statements are therefore general, but nevertheless provide aspirational, but achievable, markers of high-quality; cost effective patient care.

About the Royal College of Chiropractors' Quality Standards

Quality Standards are tools designed to help deliver the best possible outcomes for patients. They are a series of specific, concise quality statements with associated measures that provide aspirational, but achievable, markers of high-quality patient care covering the treatment of different conditions. They also form an important part in addressing the increasing priority being placed on improving quality and patient outcomes.

The primary purpose of The Royal College of Chiropractors' quality standards is to make it clear what quality care is by providing patients, the public, healthcare professionals, commissioners and chiropractors with definitions of high-quality chiropractic care.

By providing a clear description of what a high-quality service looks like, clinics can improve quality and achieve excellence. The quality standards encompass statutory requirements, best practice and existing clinical guidelines, but they are not a new set of targets or mandatory indicators for performance management. They are, however, a useful source to form the basis of clinical audit and to identify priorities for future improvement.

Chiropractors are encouraged to adopt the Royal College of Chiropractors' quality standards as practice policy. They can be used in a wide range of circumstances, such as a source of identifying CPD, promoting the services that you provide, tendering for NHS contracts, or education at a local and national level. They enable Healthcare professionals to understand the standard of service that you provide, and allow commissioners to be confident that the services they are purchasing are of high quality. Importantly, they also help patients to understand what service they should expect.

For the fully detailed version of this Quality Standard, please visit www.rcc-uk.org and choose the 'Quality' menu.

The Royal College of Chiropractors' Quality Standard on Acute Low Back Pain was developed in September 2012 and is due for review in September 2015.

The Royal College of Chiropractors
Chiltern Chambers
St Peters Avenue
Reading RG4 7DH
UK
T: +44 (0)118 946 9727
F: +44 (0)118 946 9730
E: admin@rcc-uk.org
W: www.rcc-uk.org