



Appropriateness Criteria for MRI Lumbar Spine

Information for Referring Family Physicians and Nurse Practitioners

Island Health Medical Imaging has adopted appropriateness criteria for MRI Lumbar Spine exams. These criteria are consistent with the Choosing Wisely Canada recommendations.

How will the appropriateness criteria be implemented?

An appropriateness checklist has been developed to accompany MRI Lumbar Spine referrals. The checklist must be completed by all Family Physicians and Nurse Practitioners and attached to the MRI requisition.

Why introduce appropriateness criteria?

The appropriateness criteria and checklist provide decision making support to referring Family Physicians and Nurse Practitioners and support our commitment to quality improvement.

What does mean for referring Family Physicians and Nurse Practitioners?

- Referring Family Physicians and Nurse Practitioners must complete and attach the lumbar spine checklist to the MRI requisition.
- The requisition and checklist must be submitted to the Booking Office together.
- Any MRI Lumbar Spine requisitions received without the appropriateness checklist attached will be sent back to the referring Family Physician or Nurse Practitioner as an incomplete requisition.
- The referring Family Physician or Nurse Practitioner will have to resubmit the MRI lumbar spine requisition with the appropriateness checklist attached in order for the MRI lumbar spine to be scheduled.

What are the appropriateness criteria for MRI Lumbar Spine?

One or more of the following criteria must apply for your patient to be eligible for an MRI Lumbar Spine:

- Sciatica for > 12 weeks
- MRI was recommended on a previous imaging report
- Previous lumbar spine surgery
- Cauda equina syndrome
- Suspected discitis
- History of cancer or suspected cancer
- Any neurological symptoms
- Significant acute traumatic event immediately preceding onset of symptoms
- Age over 65 with first episode of severe back pain
- Assessment of inflammatory spondyloarthropathy

Additional Resources?

Appropriateness criteria are consistent with the Choosing Wisely Canada recommendations. For more information, visit <https://choosingwiselycanada.org>

Maintained By:	MRI Practice Lead and Clinical coordinator				
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