

Thoracic Back Pain Red Flags Checklist

Patient's full name: _____

Age: _____ Date of birth: _____ Date of appointment: _____

Instructions: If you have a patient who presents with red flags for thoracic back pain, please interview them further and use this checklist to track all the red flags possible before having them undergo specific tests to assess and diagnose thoracic back pain. You can even use this during testing because some of these can only be found during testing unless their medical history already says so.

Category	Red flags
Age	• Younger than 20 years old • Older than 50 years old at the onset of pain
History	• History of cancer • History of smoking • Recent bacterial infection • Prolong corticosteroid use (about 6 months or more) • Osteoporosis • Immunosuppression • HIV infection • IV drug use
Trauma	• Recent serious injury (e.g. car accident, fall from height, blunt trauma, fractures) • Minor injury or heavy lifting despite having osteoporosis
Pain characteristics	• Constant pain with no relief, even at night • Severe pain that is getting worse over time • Pain not caused by sprain/strain (non-mechanical) • Pain persisting beyond 4 weeks despite conservative treatment
Associated symptoms	• Unexplained weight loss • Fever, chills, feeling generally unwell • Severe morning stiffness • Structural deformity • Spontaneous spleen rupture • Changes in spinal shape, lumps, or bumps

Category	Red flags
Neurological symptoms	• Severe or worsening bilateral leg weakness, numbness, and tingling • Urinary retention • Incontinence • Saddle anesthesia (cauda equina syndrome)
Others	• Pulmonary embolism • Neuroblastoma (mimicking thoracic back pain) • Early menopause • Thin body build • Sedentary lifestyle • Excessive consumption of caffeine or alcohol
Notes	