



CLINICAL GUIDELINES | 4 APRIL 2017

## Noninvasive Treatments for Acute, Subacute, and Chronic Low Back Pain: A Clinical Practice Guideline From the American College of Physicians

### Abstract

#### Description:

The American College of Physicians (ACP) developed this guideline to present the evidence and provide clinical recommendations on noninvasive treatment of low back pain.

#### Methods:

Using the ACP grading system, the committee based these recommendations on a systematic review of randomized, controlled trials and systematic reviews published through April 2015 on noninvasive pharmacologic and nonpharmacologic treatments for low back pain. Updated searches were performed through November 2016. Clinical outcomes evaluated included reduction or elimination of low back pain, improvement in back-specific and overall function, improvement in health-related quality of life, reduction in work disability and return to work, global improvement, number of back pain episodes or time between episodes, patient satisfaction, and adverse effects.

#### Target Audience and Patient Population:

The target audience for this guideline includes all clinicians, and the target patient population includes adults with acute, subacute, or chronic low back pain.

#### Recommendation 1:

*Given that most patients with acute or subacute low back pain improve over time regardless of treatment, clinicians and patients should select nonpharmacologic treatment with superficial heat, massage, acupuncture, or spinal manipulation. If pharmacologic treatment is desired, clinicians and patients should select nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or skeletal muscle relaxants. (Grade: strong recommendation)*

#### Recommendation 2:

*For patients with chronic low back pain, clinicians and patients should initially select nonpharmacologic treatment with exercise, multidisciplinary rehabilitation, acupuncture, mindfulness-based stress reduction, tai chi, yoga, motor control exercise, progressive relaxation, electromyography biofeedback, low-level laser therapy, operant therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, or spinal manipulation. (Grade: strong recommendation)*

#### Recommendation 3:

*In patients with chronic low back pain who have had an inadequate response to nonpharmacologic therapy, clinicians and patients should consider pharmacologic treatment with nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs as first-line therapy, or tramadol or duloxetine as second-line therapy. Clinicians should only consider opioids as an option in patients who have failed the aforementioned treatments and only if the potential benefits outweigh the risks for individual patients and after a discussion of known risks and realistic benefits with patients. (Grade: weak recommendation)*