

Back Pain

History

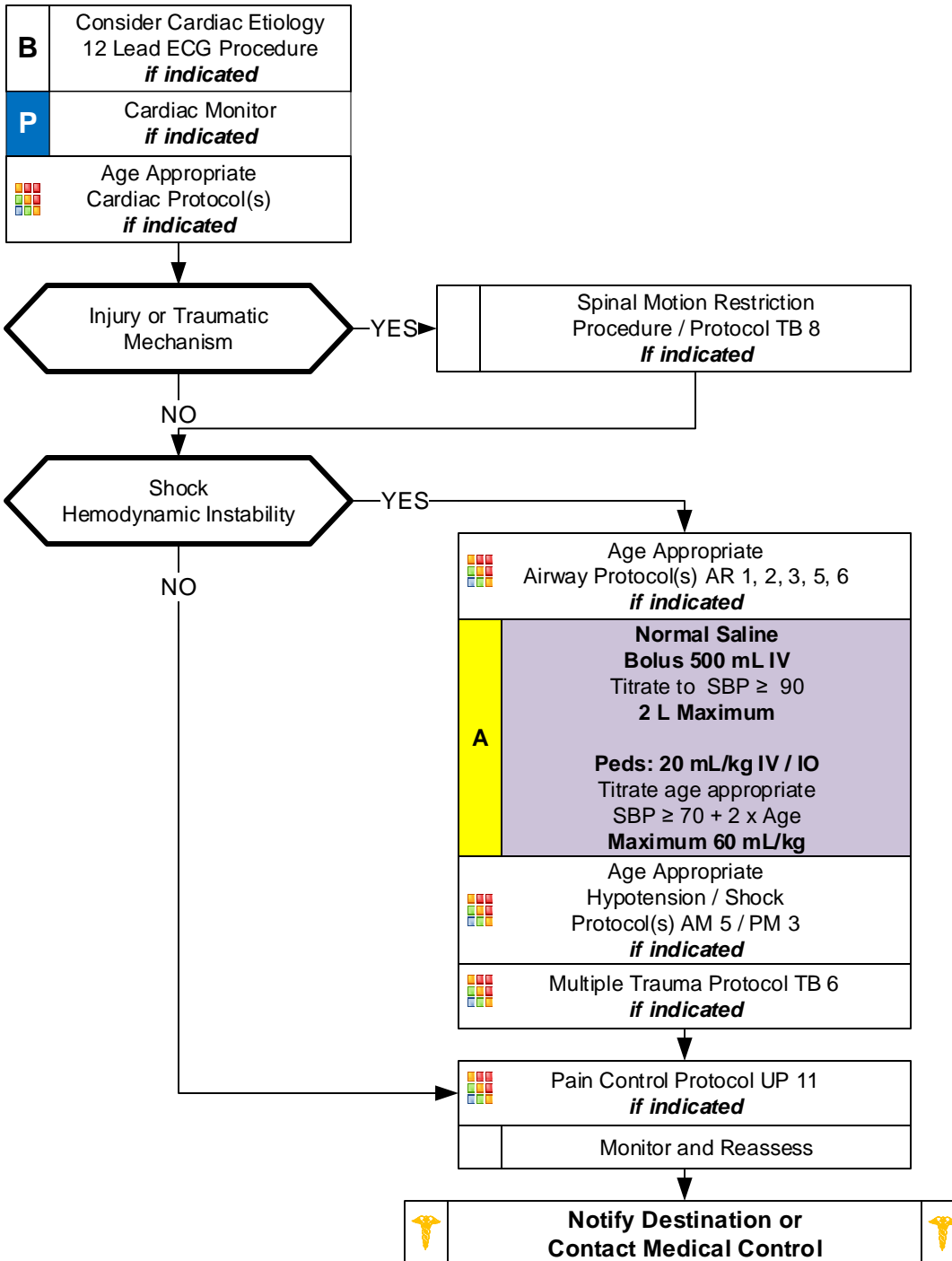
- Age
- Past medical history
- Past surgical history
- Medications
- Onset of pain / injury
- Previous back injury
- Traumatic mechanism
- Location of pain
- Fever
- Improvement or worsening with activity

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



Back Pain

Pearls

- **Recommended Exam: Mental Status, Heart, Lungs, Abdomen, Neuro, Lower extremity perfusion**
- Back pain is one of the most common complaints in medicine and affects 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.