



Checklist for Acute Examination of the Lumbar and Thoracic Spine

History

Ask questions pertaining to the following:

- ☐ Chief complaint
- ☐ Mechanism of injury
- ☐ Unusual sensations of numbness, tingling, burning pain into the lower extremities
- ☐ Type and location of pain or symptoms
- ☐ Previous injury (number of prior episodes and comparison with current episode)

Observation

- ☐ Visible facial expressions of pain
- ☐ Swelling, deformity, abnormal contours, or discoloration
- ☐ Freedom of movement and ability to get on and off the table
- ☐ Overall position, posture, and alignment
- ☐ Muscle development—are there areas of muscular spasm or atrophy?

Palpation

Bilaterally palpate for pain, temperature, tenderness, spasm, and restricted mobility:

- ☐ Bony: spinous processes, interspaces and interspinous ligament, ilium, sacrum, sacroiliac joint, sacrotuberous ligament, ischial tuberosities
- ☐ Soft tissue (superficial to deep): paraspinals, quadratus lumborum, abdominals, latissimus dorsi, lower trapezius, hip rotators (piriformis), gluteals

Special Tests

- ☐ Neuropathy tests (Valsalva, straight-leg and well straight-leg raise, and slump tests)
- ☐ Stork standing test (pars fracture)
- ☐ Passive Spring test (screen for SI joint dysfunction)

Range of Motion

- ☐ Active ROM for forward flexion, extension, lateral flexion, and rotation
- ☐ Passive ROM for the same motions if non-painful in active ROM
- ☐ Costovertebral motion

Strength Tests

- ☐ Active ROM against gravity and weight of trunk for abdominals, lateral flexion, and extension

Neurological Tests

- ☐ Sensory for L2-S2
- ☐ Motor for L2-S2
- ☐ Reflex (patellar, hamstring, and Achilles tendons)

Functional Tests