



METASTATIC SPINAL CORD COMPRESSION

MSCC

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

- ! Referred back pain is multi-segmental or band-like
- ! Escalating pain which is poorly responsive to treatment (incl medication)
- ! Different character or site to previous symptoms
- ! Funny feelings, odd sensations or heavy legs (multi-segmental)
- ! Lying flat increases back pain
- ! Agonising pain causing anguish and despair
- ! Gait disturbance, unsteadiness, especially on stairs (not just a limp)
- ! Sleep grossly disturbed due to pain being worse at night

LATE SIGNS

NB – Established motor / sensory / bladder bowel disturbances

Any combination seek help immediately!

To access the Greater Manchester and Cheshire MSCC guidelines go to: www.christie.nhs.uk (search 'spinal cord compression')



KEY RED FLAGS

Past medical history of cancer
(but note 25% of patients do not have a diagnosed primary)

Early diagnosis is essential
as the prognosis is severely impaired once paralysis occurs

A combination of Red Flags increases suspicion
(the more red flags the higher the risk and the greater the urgency)



Red flags are clinical findings that increase the level of suspicion that there is a serious medical condition presenting as a common, non-serious, musculoskeletal condition.

Red flags are features from a patient's subjective and objective assessment which are thought to put them at a higher risk of serious condition or pathology and warrant referral for further diagnostic testing.

Physiotherapy cannot be commenced until further investigation has been undertaken and serious conditions are ruled out.



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