

**Red flag symptoms and signs<sup>7</sup>**

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**Cauda equina syndrome**

- Severe or progressive bilateral neurological deficit of the legs
- New urinary retention and/or urinary incontinence
- New faecal incontinence
- Perianal or perineal sensory loss (saddle anaesthesia or paraesthesia)
- Unexpected laxity of the anal sphincter

**Spinal fracture**

- Sudden onset severe central spinal pain, relieved by lying down
- History of major/minor trauma or strenuous lifting in people with osteoporosis or those who use corticosteroids
- Structural deformity of the spine
- Point tenderness over a vertebral body

**Cancer**

- Age  $\geq$  50
- Gradual onset of symptoms
- Pain when supine, that disturbs sleep or is aggravated by straining
- Thoracic pain
- Localised spinal tenderness
- No improvement after four to six weeks of conservative therapy
- Unexplained weight loss
- History of cancer

**Infection**

- Fever
- Tuberculosis
- Recent urinary tract infection
- Diabetes
- History of intravenous drug use
- HIV infection
- Immunosuppression