



Appendix

**This appendix was part of the submitted manuscript and has been peer reviewed.
It is posted as supplied by the authors.**

Appendix to: Bardin LD, King P, Maher CG. Diagnostic triage of low back pain: a practical approach for primary care. *Med J Aust* 2017; 206: 268-273. doi: 10.5694/mja16.00828.

APPENDIX: STarT Back Matched treatments (from <http://www.keele.ac.uk/sbst/matchedtreatments>)

Low risk package

The patients in the low risk category are very likely to improve. The aims of this package are to support and enable self-management. The key factors are to address patient concerns and to provide information.

- One-off consultation with clinician (doctor, physiotherapist or nurse) sufficient for most patients
- Assessment to include medical issues but also patient worries, concerns and social impact
- Brief physical assessment as appropriate. Examination helps with patient confidence
- Medication review and advice
- Address specific patient issues from the assessment
- Seek to encourage activity and self-management
- Avoid unhelpful labels and medicalisation
- Provide oral and written information
- Explain outlook is good but can re-consult if necessary

Medium risk package

This builds on the assessment from the low risk package. The main aims are to restore function (including work), minimise disability even if pain is unchanged and to support appropriate self-management.

- Similar to low risk, elicit concerns and adequate physical examination
- Tailored treatment according to physical findings and specific needs or worries of the individual patient
- Course of physiotherapy, which for some patients may only be brief
- Specific physiotherapy interventions when clear specific findings from physical assessment (ie, manual therapy, specific exercises).
- General functional activities when no strong relationship between physical findings and back pain complaint
- Treatment objectives should be specific and have an end time point. All specific treatment effects should “translate” into functional improvements and reduced disability
- Some patients will need onward referral to specialist services (ie, secondary care spinal services, ortho, pain clinic)

High risk package

This again builds on the low and medium risk packages. The aims are to reduce pain, reduce disability and improve psychological functioning. The physiotherapists delivering the high risk package have additional training, mentorship and ongoing professional support to enable them to elicit and address more complex issues in patients who often have additional psycho-social barriers to recovery. It is important to emphasis that the physiotherapists also provided physical treatments to these patients as required.

- 6 individual (45–60 minutes) physiotherapy appointments over 3 months using a combined physical and cognitive behavioural approach
- Enable patients to manage ongoing or future episodes of low back pain
- Specific focus on cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses to pain and their impact on function
- Identification of potential obstacles to rehabilitation (eg, Yellow and Blue Flags)
- Identification of possible targets for intervention