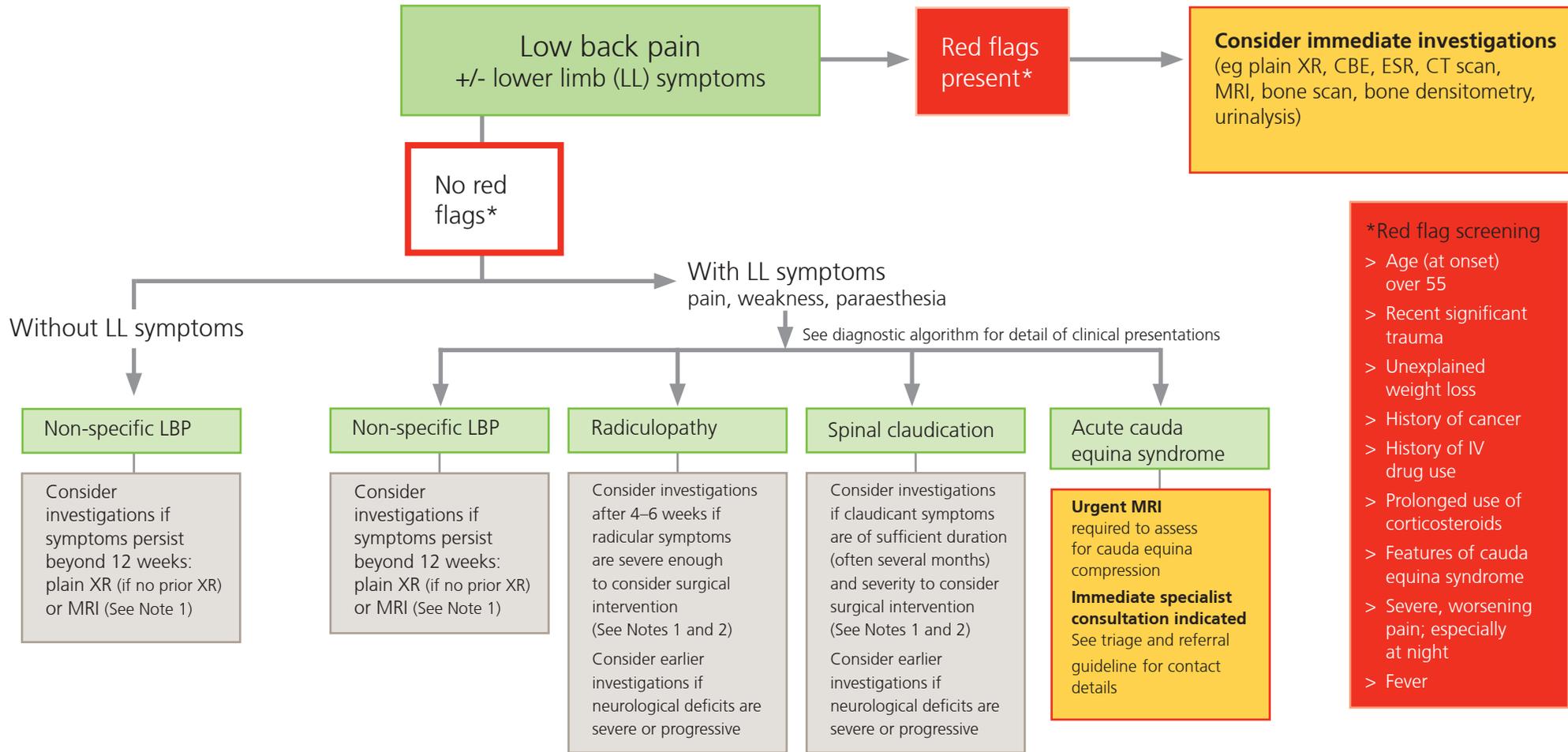


# Lumbar disorders – imaging guideline



- \*Red flag screening**
- > Age (at onset) over 55
  - > Recent significant trauma
  - > Unexplained weight loss
  - > History of cancer
  - > History of IV drug use
  - > Prolonged use of corticosteroids
  - > Features of cauda equina syndrome
  - > Severe, worsening pain; especially at night
  - > Fever

Note 1: Lumbar MRI is usually the screening modality of choice for the investigation of lumbar disorders. Self-funded MRIs are available via GP referral at a cost of approximately \$250 (not Medicare rebatable). If MRI is not available or affordable, lumbar CT may be indicated, with consideration given to risks of radiation exposure – particularly in the case of repeated imaging and younger patients (<50 years).

Note 2: Imaging is not an essential component of referral information if a clear clinical diagnosis can be made.