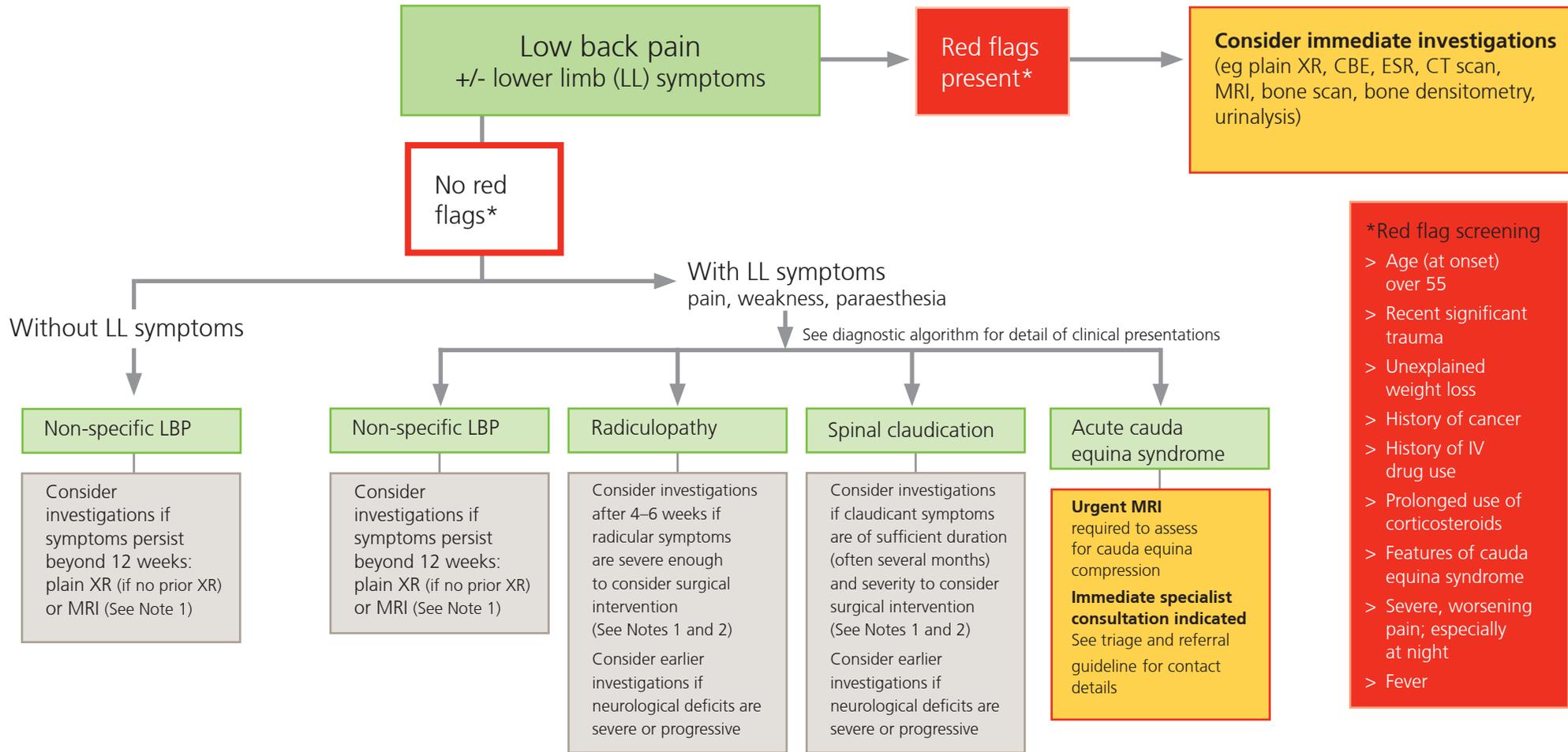


Lumbar disorders – imaging guideline



***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.