



MDGuidelines – ACOEM *Practice Guidelines*

User Guide

1 Overview

1.1 Purpose and Intended Audience

The purpose of this guide is to help users become familiar with the new version of ACOEM’s *Practice Guidelines* located at www.mdguidelines.com.

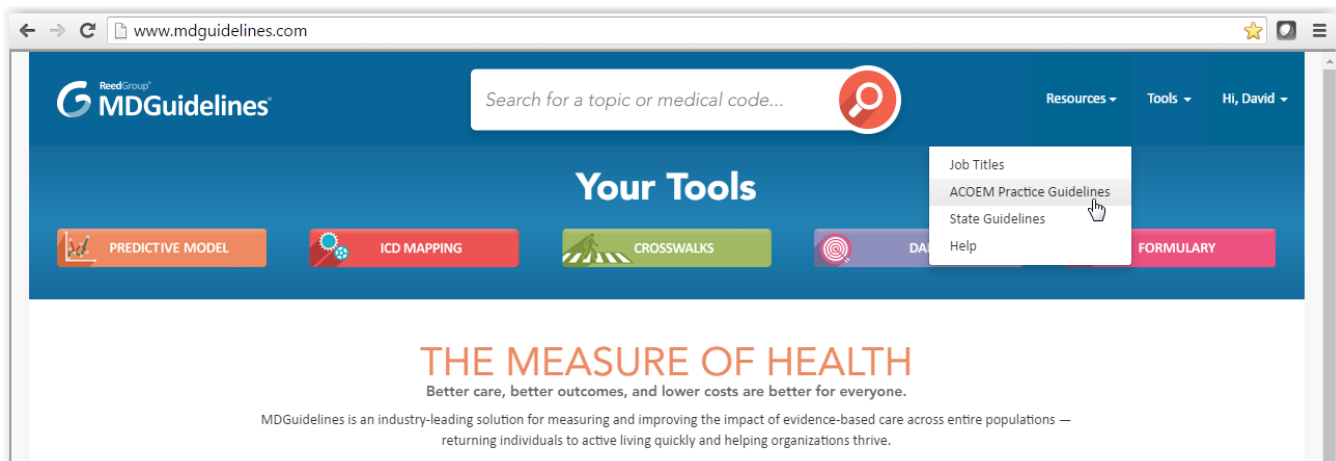
ACOEM’s *Practice Guidelines* are the gold standard in the effective treatment of work-related injuries and illnesses. The *Guidelines* present essential evidence-based information to address the injured worker’s functional impairment and safely return him or her to work. The treatment approach takes a comprehensive view that encompasses the medical, psychosocial, and functional outcomes of the injured worker.

The *Guidelines* cover diagnostic and treatment options for cervical and thoracic spine, low back, shoulder, elbow, hand / wrist / forearm, hip and groin, knee, ankle and foot, occupational interstitial lung disease, and occupational asthma. They also cover chronic pain and the use of opioids. The *Guidelines* are an important tool for physicians and other health care providers, and all others with responsibility for or involvement in worker health and workers’ compensation systems.

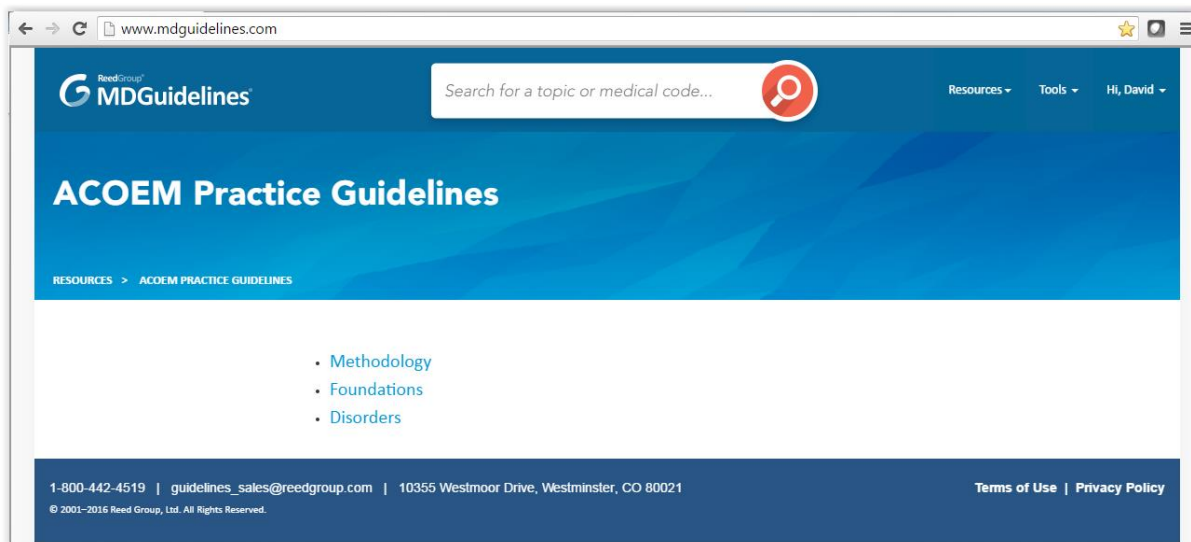
To learn more about ACOEM and the *Practice Guidelines*, visit the [ACOEM Practice Guidelines Methodology](#) page.

1.2 Getting Started

The ACOEM content is located under the **Resources** menu at the top-right corner of the webpage. After clicking on the dropdown menu, select the ACOEM *Practice Guidelines* link:



After clicking on the link, you will be taken to the main directory for the ACOEM *Practice Guidelines* (below). From here, you can select either the Methodology, Foundations, or Disorders sections. This content is described in more detail in Section 2.



NOTE: The MDGuidelines search function will not return ACOEM content results at this time. An advanced search will be added in the future to include results from ACOEM and other content sources.

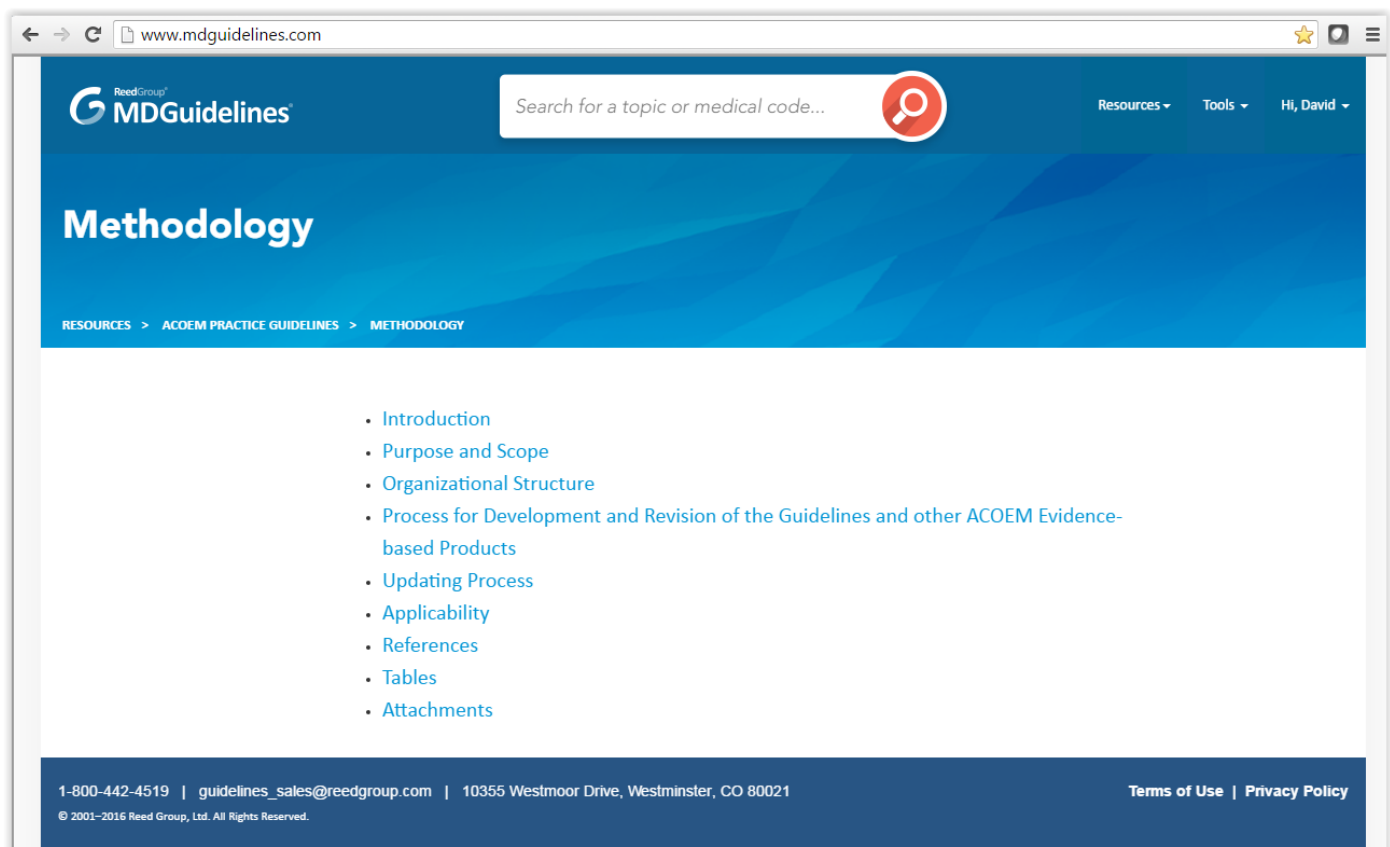
2 ACOEM Content

There are three primary sections of content for ACOEM: Methodology, Foundations, and Disorders.

2.1 Methodology

The **Methodology** section provides information on the following:

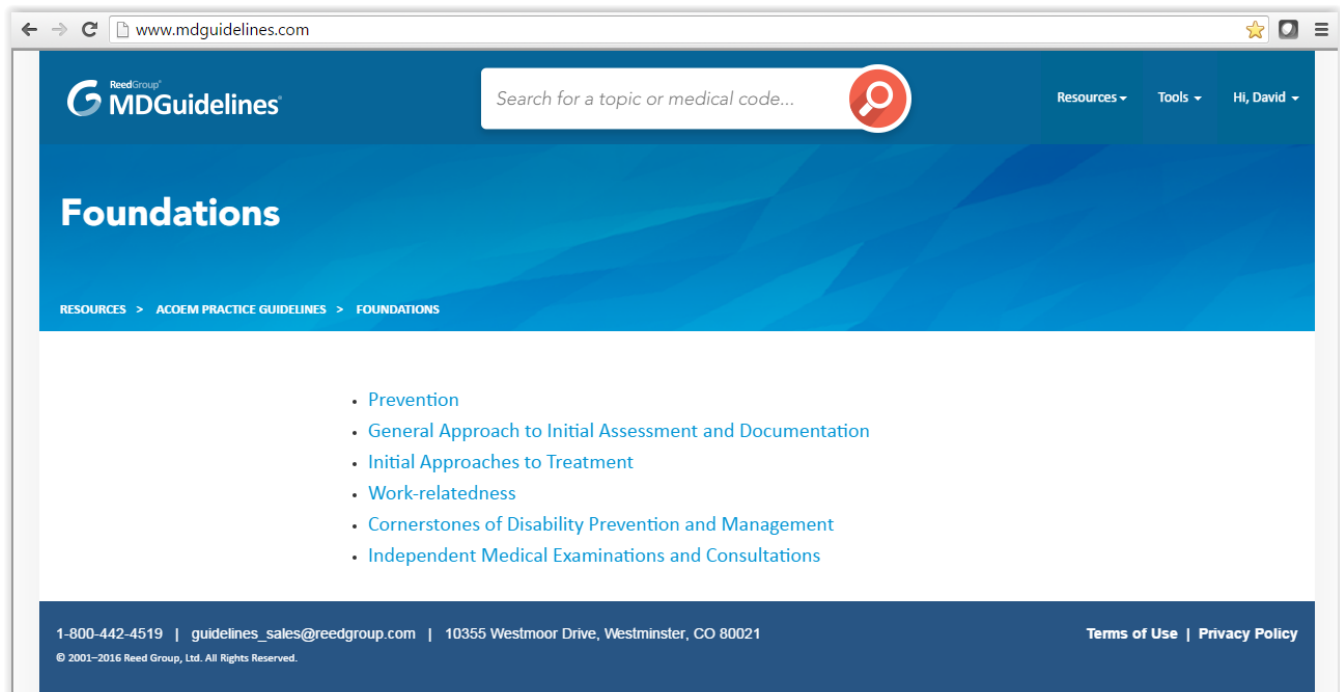
- History of ACOEM
- Why the guidelines were created
- Structure of the ACOEM organization
- Process for developing, revising, and updating the guidelines and other ACOEM evidence-based products
- References



2.2 Foundations

The **Foundations** section discusses the underlying cornerstones of the ACOEM *Practice Guidelines*:

- Prevention
- General Approach to Initial Assessment and Documentation
- Initial Approaches to Treatment
- Work-relatedness
- Cornerstones of Disability Prevention and Management
- Independent Medical Examinations and Consultations

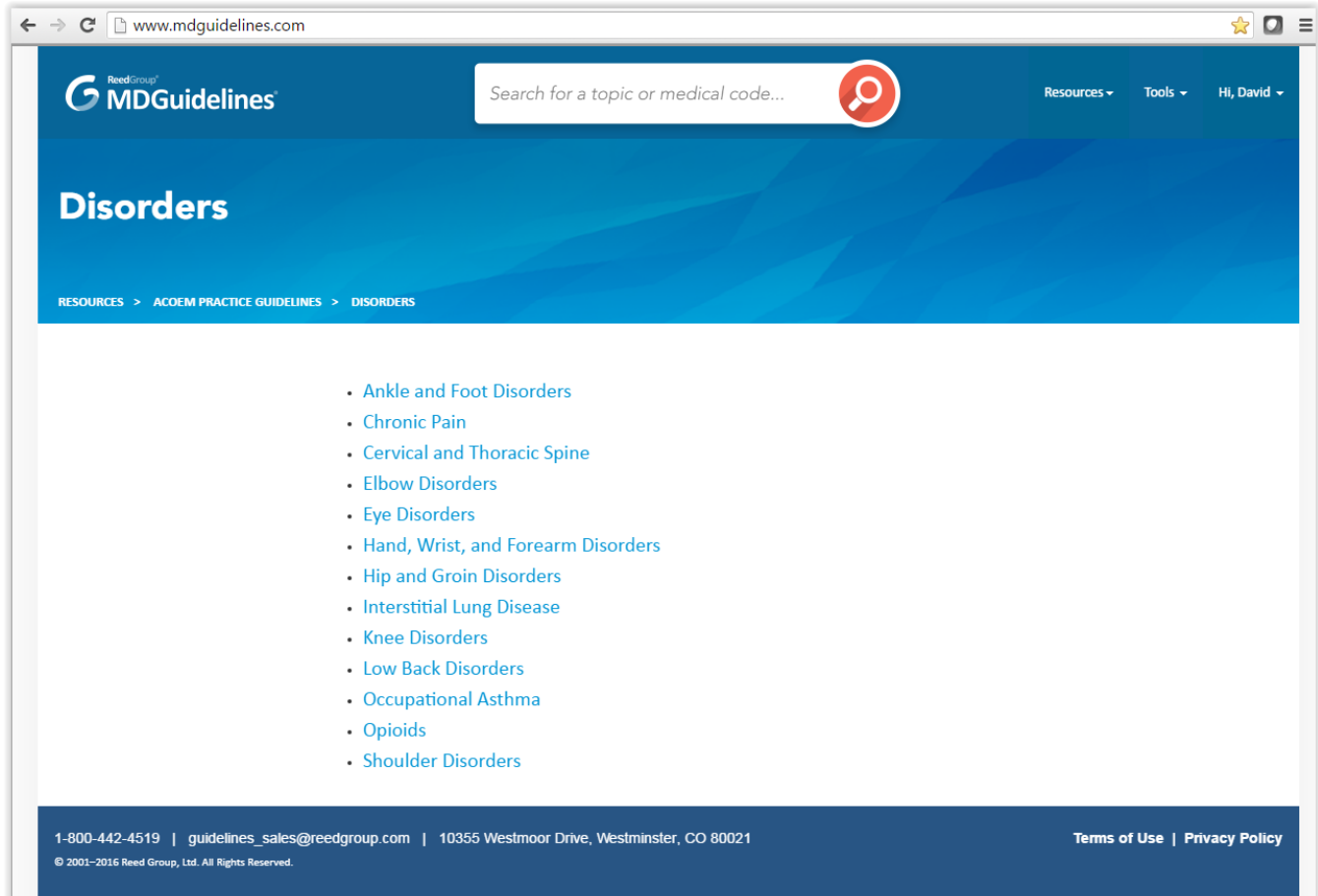


2.3 Disorders

The **Disorders** section provides the full text of conditions covered in the ACOEM *Practice Guidelines*, including diagnostic and treatment recommendations. The same diagnostic and treatment recommendations are also available in an easily searchable, easily printable format in our DART tool. For more information on DART, see <https://new.mdguidelines.com/Resources/Help/About-DART>.

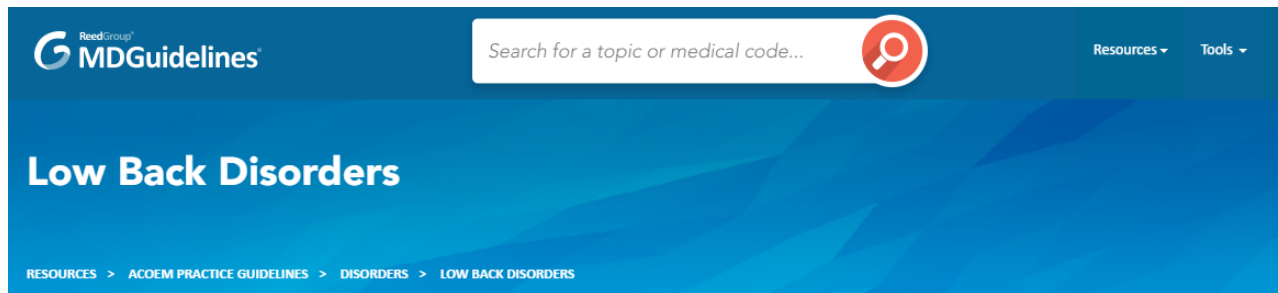
The current guidelines covered by ACOEM are as follows:

- Ankle and Foot Disorders
- Chronic Pain
- Cervical and Thoracic Spine
- Elbow Disorders
- Eye Disorders
- Hand, Wrist, and Forearm Disorders
- Hip and Groin Disorders
- Interstitial Lung Disease
- Knee Disorders
- Low Back Disorders
- Occupational Asthma
- Opioids
- Shoulder Disorders



The Disorder guidelines generally contain the following information, in relation to a specific diagnosis covered by ACOEM:

- Workflows (previously called Algorithms)
- Risk and Causation
- Initial Assessment, History, Physical Examination, and Testing Procedures
- Red Flags
- Management Approach
- Diagnostic Recommendations and related evidence
- Treatment Recommendations and related evidence
- Follow-up Visits
- Contributors and references



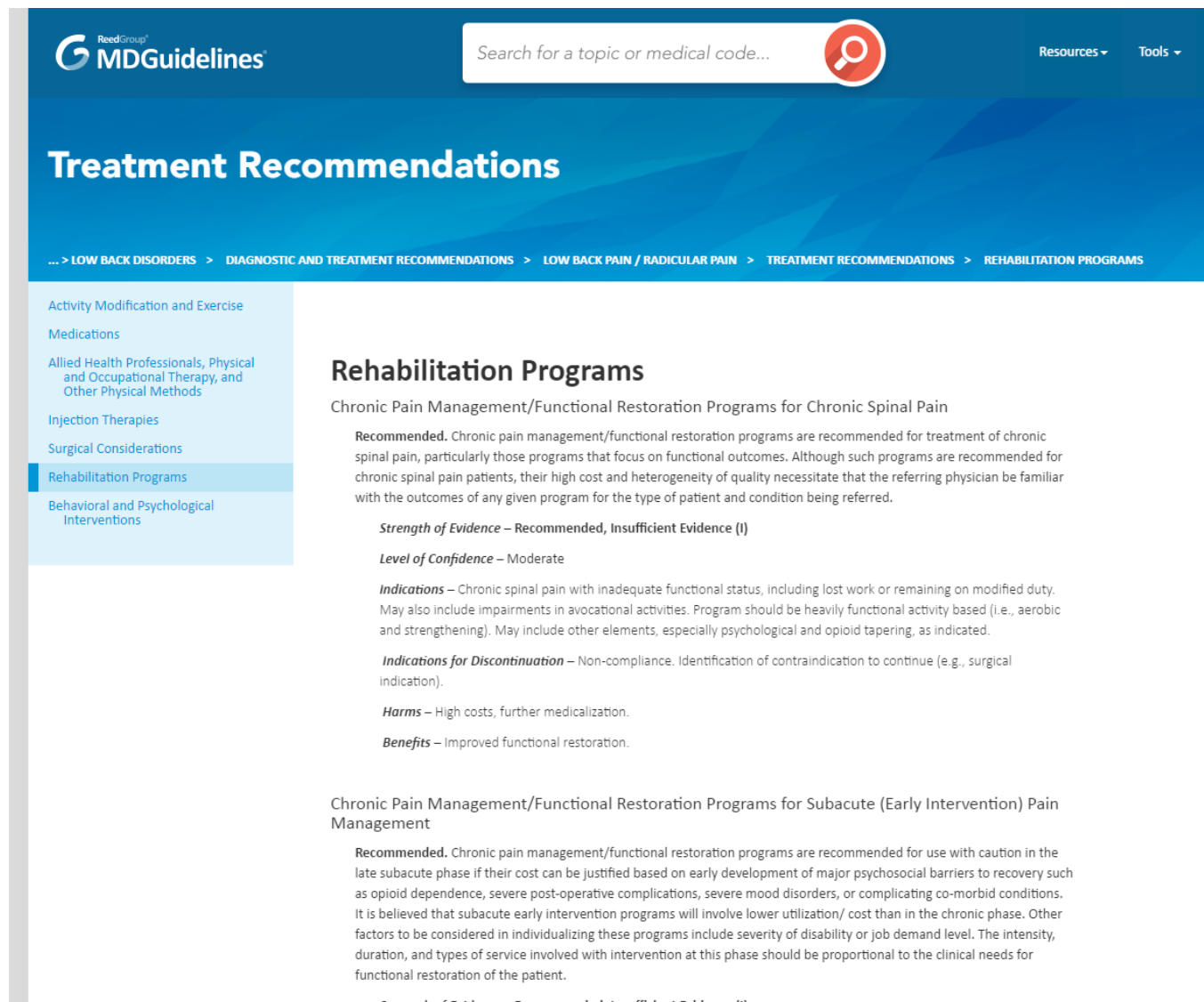
- [Workflows](#)
- [Introduction](#)
- [Risk and Causation](#)
- [Initial Assessment](#)
- [History](#)
- [Red Flags](#)
- [Physical Examination](#)
- [Testing Procedures](#)
- [Management Approach](#)
- [Diagnostic and Treatment Recommendations](#)
- [Follow-up Visits](#)
- [Appendix 1: Low-Quality Randomized Controlled Trials](#)
- [Contributors and References](#)

3 Diagnostic and Treatment Recommendations

3.1 Viewing the Recommendations

Within a *Practice Guideline*, you will find diagnostic and treatment recommendations as provided by ACOEM. The same diagnostic and treatment recommendations are also available in an easily searchable, easily printable format in our DART tool. For more information on DART, see <https://new.mdguidelines.com/Resources/Help/About-DART>.

From within the diagnostic or treatment recommendation section of a guideline, you will need to choose a specific diagnosis. Once you choose a specific diagnosis, you will be presented with several treatment options for each. For example, here are the Rehabilitation Programs treatment recommendations for Low Back Pain:



The screenshot shows the MDGuidelines website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search for a topic or medical code..." and a magnifying glass icon. To the right of the search bar are links for "Resources" and "Tools". Below the search bar is a large blue header with the text "Treatment Recommendations". Underneath the header is a breadcrumb trail: "... > LOW BACK DISORDERS > DIAGNOSTIC AND TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS > LOW BACK PAIN / RADICULAR PAIN > TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS > REHABILITATION PROGRAMS". On the left side, there is a vertical navigation menu with several categories: "Activity Modification and Exercise", "Medications", "Allied Health Professionals, Physical and Occupational Therapy, and Other Physical Methods", "Injection Therapies", "Surgical Considerations", "Rehabilitation Programs" (which is highlighted in blue), and "Behavioral and Psychological Interventions". The main content area is titled "Rehabilitation Programs" and contains two sub-sections. The first sub-section is "Chronic Pain Management/Functional Restoration Programs for Chronic Spinal Pain". It includes a "Recommended" section, a "Strength of Evidence – Recommended, Insufficient Evidence (I)" section, a "Level of Confidence – Moderate" section, an "Indications" section, an "Indications for Discontinuation" section, a "Harms" section, and a "Benefits" section. The second sub-section is "Chronic Pain Management/Functional Restoration Programs for Subacute (Early Intervention) Pain Management". It includes a "Recommended" section and a "Strength of Evidence – Recommended, Insufficient Evidence (I)" section.

3.2 Recommendation Definitions

There is an explicit link between the recommendations and the supporting evidence. Each recommendation includes references. Each recommendation has an accompanying paragraph that describes the Panel's conclusion about the evidence found on that question and the rationale for the specific recommendation. These paragraphs explain how the Panel interpreted and weighed the evidence and how they balanced this against other considerations such as potential harms and costs in formulating the recommendations. For example, if the Level I evidence found was inconsistent, then the Panel comments on how they interpreted and weighed the evidence in a logical and fair way and adhered to the First Principles (see <https://new.mdguidelines.com/Resources/Help/About-DART>).

Recommendations are made at the following levels of evidence:

- Strongly Recommended, "A" Level Evidence
- Moderately Recommended, "B" Level Evidence
- Recommended, "C" Level Evidence
- Recommended, Insufficient Evidence (Consensus-based), "I" Level
- No Recommendation, Insufficient Evidence (Consensus-based), "I" Level
- Not Recommended, Insufficient Evidence (Consensus-based), "I" Level
- Not Recommended, "C" Level Evidence
- Moderately Not Recommended, "B" Level Evidence
- Strongly Not Recommended, "A" Level Evidence

Recommendations for diagnosis treatment are made in the following general categories:

- Diagnostic Interventions (e.g., X-rays, MRI)
- Medications (including topical creams)
- Allied Health Interventions (e.g., acupuncture, manipulation)
- Electrical Therapies (e.g., iontophoresis)
- Hot and Cold Therapies (e.g., ice, heat)
- Devices (e.g., slings, splints, crutches)
- Injection Therapy (e.g., glucocorticosteroids, Botox)
- Surgical Considerations
- Behavioral and Psychological Interventions
- Rehabilitation Programs (e.g., physical therapy)

3.4 Evidence Studies

Within the recommendations sections, you may also find the Evidence Tables used to formulate the recommendations.

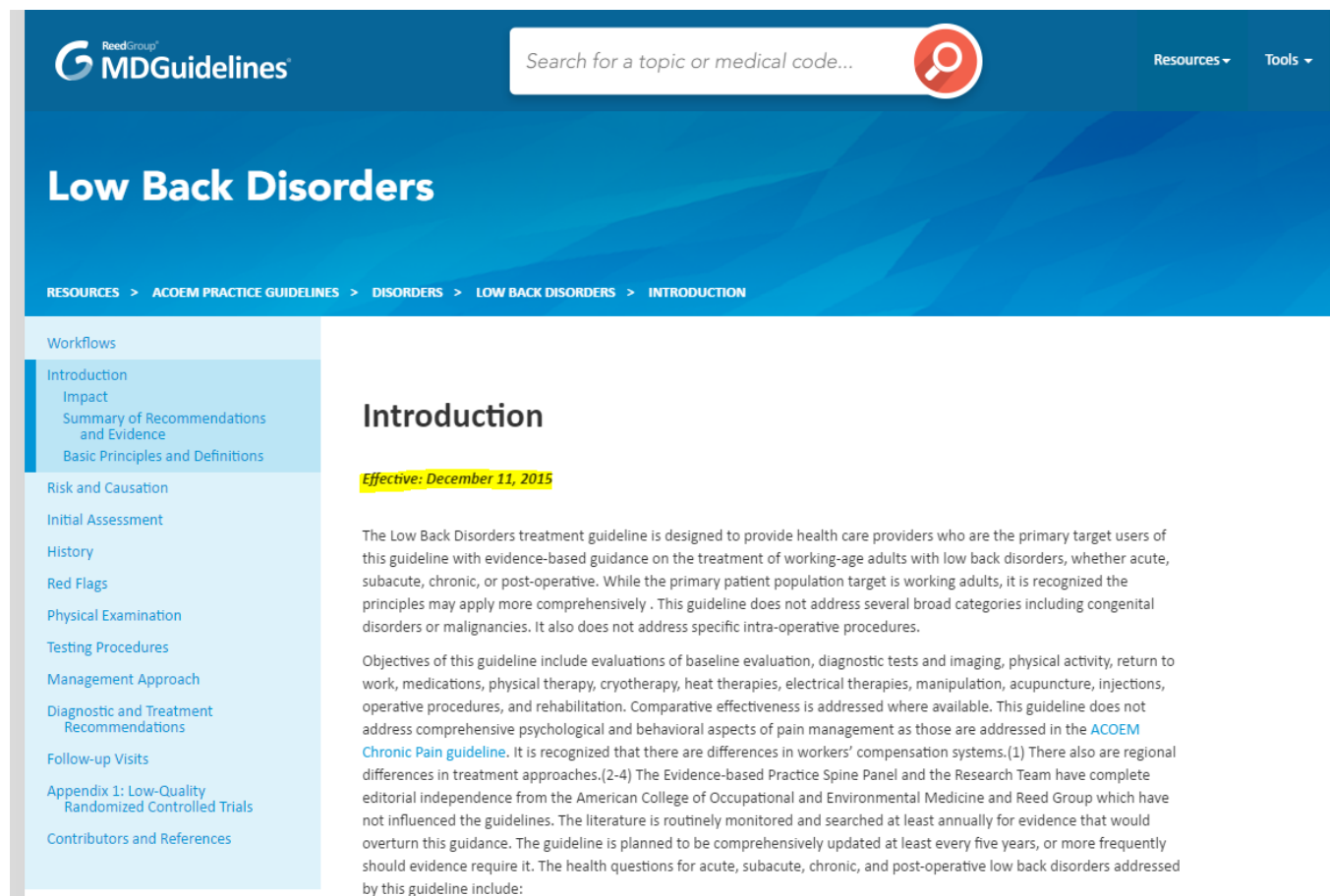
4 Other Information

4.1 Printing

In order to print a section of the ACOEM Practice Guidelines, use your browser print functionality. You may also select a portion of the text, copy it, and paste it into another word processing application and print only the text that is important to you.

4.2 Version Information

The Introduction section of each *Practice Guideline* contains the effective / revised date of publication for that particular guideline (see below).



Low Back Disorders

RESOURCES > ACOEM PRACTICE GUIDELINES > DISORDERS > LOW BACK DISORDERS > INTRODUCTION

Workflows

- Introduction
 - Impact
 - Summary of Recommendations and Evidence
 - Basic Principles and Definitions
- Risk and Causation
- Initial Assessment
- History
- Red Flags
- Physical Examination
- Testing Procedures
- Management Approach
- Diagnostic and Treatment Recommendations
- Follow-up Visits
- Appendix 1: Low-Quality Randomized Controlled Trials
- Contributors and References

Introduction

Effective: December 11, 2015

The Low Back Disorders treatment guideline is designed to provide health care providers who are the primary target users of this guideline with evidence-based guidance on the treatment of working-age adults with low back disorders, whether acute, subacute, chronic, or post-operative. While the primary patient population target is working adults, it is recognized the principles may apply more comprehensively. This guideline does not address several broad categories including congenital disorders or malignancies. It also does not address specific intra-operative procedures.

Objectives of this guideline include evaluations of baseline evaluation, diagnostic tests and imaging, physical activity, return to work, medications, physical therapy, cryotherapy, heat therapies, electrical therapies, manipulation, acupuncture, injections, operative procedures, and rehabilitation. Comparative effectiveness is addressed where available. This guideline does not address comprehensive psychological and behavioral aspects of pain management as those are addressed in the [ACOEM Chronic Pain guideline](#). It is recognized that there are differences in workers' compensation systems.(1) There also are regional differences in treatment approaches.(2-4) The Evidence-based Practice Spine Panel and the Research Team have complete editorial independence from the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine and Reed Group which have not influenced the guidelines. The literature is routinely monitored and searched at least annually for evidence that would overturn this guidance. The guideline is planned to be comprehensively updated at least every five years, or more frequently should evidence require it. The health questions for acute, subacute, chronic, and post-operative low back disorders addressed by this guideline include:

When citing the ACOEM Practice Guidelines, the following general format is recommended:

American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. ACOEM *Practice Guidelines*: Low Back Disorders. MDGuidelines website. <http://new.mdguidelines.com/Resources/ACOEM-Practice-Guidelines/Disorders/Low-Back-Disorders>. December 11, 2015. Accessed May 18, 2016.

5 Support

If you need assistance with the ACOEM content, you can contact the MDGuidelines support team at 800.442.4519 or supportteam@reedgroup.com.