

NATIONAL CLINICAL GUIDELINE FOR THE NON-SURGICAL TREATMENT OF RECENT ONSET NERVE ROOT COMPROMISE IN THE NECK WITH SYMPTOMS RADIATING TO THE ARM (CERVICAL RADICULOPATHY)

Quick guide

Information and guidance	
√	It is good practice to offer patient education to patients with recent onset cervical radiculopathy. The patient education should comprise information about the prognosis and pain mechanisms as well as individualised guidance on appropriate activities and pain management.
√	It is good practice to provide advice on individualised physical activity and general exercise to patients with recent onset cervical radiculopathy.
Medical treatment	
√	It is good practice to offer short-term add-on treatment with tramadol or NSAID to patients with pain due to recent onset cervical radiculopathy, in case paracetamol has not had sufficient effect. The choice should be made in consideration of possible adverse events and patient preferences.
Active treatments	
↑	Consider offering motor control exercise for the neck to patients with recent onset cervical radiculopathy as an add-on to other treatment (⊕○○○)
√	It is good practice to consider treatment with Mechanical Diagnosis and Therapy (direction-specific exercises) for patients with recent onset cervical radiculopathy as an add-on to other treatment.
Passive treatments	
↑	Consider offering manual joint mobilisation techniques to patients with recent onset cervical radiculopathy as an add-on to other treatment (⊕○○○)
↑	Consider offering cervical traction to patients with recent onset cervical radiculopathy as an add-on to other treatment (⊕○○○)
√	It is not good practice, on a routine basis, to offer massage to patients with recent onset cervical radiculopathy as an add-on to other treatment.
√	It is not good practice, on a routine basis, to offer acupuncture to patients with recent onset cervical radiculopathy as an add-on to other treatment.

About the quick guide

This quick guide contains the key recommendations from the national clinical guideline for the non-surgical treatment of recent onset neck pain with affection of nerve roots and symptoms radiating to the arm (cervical radiculopathy). The guideline was prepared by the Danish Health Authority (DHA).

The national clinical guideline for the non-surgical treatment of cervical radiculopathy focuses on adult patients (over the age of 18) with recent onset clinical signs (with a duration of less than 3 months) of cervical radiculopathy caused by cervical disc herniation and/or degenerative changes in the neck. This means that radiculopathy caused by cancer, infections, traumas, circulation insufficiency, osteoporosis or arm pain which is not caused by changes in the cervical spine is not covered. No distinction is made between cervical radiculopathy caused by disc herniation and other degenerative conditions, since treatment is most frequently initiated without availability of diagnostic images. The guideline does not cover cervical radiculopathy in patients with symptoms of longer duration (more than 3 months).

Thus, the guideline contains recommendations for selected parts of the field and therefore must be seen alongside the other guidelines, process descriptions etc. within this field.

The recommendations are preceded by the following indications of their strength:

- ↑↑ = a strong recommendation for
- ↓↓ = a strong recommendation against
- ↑ = a weak/conditional recommendation for
- ↓ = a weak/conditional recommendation against

The symbol (√) stands for good practice. This symbol is used in case of lack of evidence, when the working group wants to emphasise particular aspects of the established clinical practice.

The recommendations are followed by the symbols mentioned below which indicate the strength of the underlying evidence – from high to very low:

- (⊕⊕⊕⊕) = high
- (⊕⊕⊕○) = moderate
- (⊕⊕○○) = low
- (⊕○○○) = very low

In case of lack of evidence, a recommendation is not followed by a symbol. This applies to the good practice recommendations.

Further information at sundhedsstyrelsen.dk

At sundhedsstyrelsen.dk, a full-length version of the national clinical guideline is available, including a detailed review of the underlying evidence for the recommendations.

About the national clinical guidelines

The national clinical guideline is one of the 47 national clinical guidelines to be prepared by the DHA during the period 2013-2016.

Further information about the choice of subjects, method and process is available at sundhedsstyrelsen.dk.
