Assessing and categorising irritability of Upper Cervical Instability (UCI) in patients with symptomatic generalised hypermobility to guide assessment and management

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TABLE 4 Symptoms are mechanically irritable.

A. Condition is severe:

- · Poor tolerance to any time vertical
- · Bed bound due to cervical symptoms
- Need to use a walker or wheelchair due to moderate or intermittently severe problems with coordination and balance rather than pain or weakness, or restricted to bed
 due to cervical symptoms
- · Extreme cervical spine guarding with fear of movement secondary to severe reactivity
- · Choking, trouble swallowing, and voice changes
- · Profound visual disturbances
- · Severe nausea with any neck movement
- · Functional outcome measure relevant to UCI classified as Severe

B. Condition is easily flared:

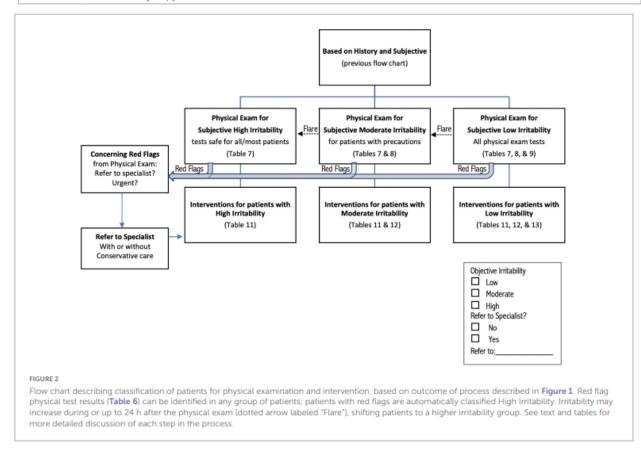
- UCI flares are disproportionate compared to provoking insult or activity. e.g., aggravated by minor rapid/unexpected movements/perturbations, traveling in car/bus, prolonged postures.
- Presyncope, syncope, drop attacks or seizure-like episodes with neck extension or rotation.
- · History of excessive provocation associated with previous conservative care including hands-on manual therapy or exercise.

C. Prolonged time to calm after flare:

- Provoked UCI symptoms take excessive time to settle to pre-flare state: e.g., more than 24 h for pain or more than several hours for neurological symptoms
- · Pt regularly needs to resort to wearing a cervical collar or bedrest to ease symptoms after a flare
- . Inability to tolerate being upright for > 24 h after flare

Grading mechanical irritability

- Low irritability
 - o A, B, and C are all typically absent, or
 - $\circ~$ B or C might be occasionally present at a low level.
- Moderate irritability:
 - o A, B, or C are intermittently present, or
 - o A or B or C is frequently present, but not all three consistently.
- · High irritability:
 - o A, B, and C are all frequently present.



Russek LN, Block NP, Byrne E, Chalela S, Chan C, Comerford M, Frost N, Hennessey S, McCarthy A, Nicholson LL, Parry J. Presentation and physical therapy management of upper cervical instability in patients with symptomatic generalized joint hypermobility: International expert consensus recommendations. Frontiers in Medicine. 2023 Jan 18;9:4020.