

Practice Management Guideline Pediatric Trauma Cervical Spine Clearance

STEP 1:

IS IMAGE NEEDED?
EVALUATE FOR:

Symptoms:

- Neck pain, difficulty with movement
- Focal sensory/motor deficit
- Abnormal head position

Mechanism:

- Dive/axial load, clothesline
- MVC w/ any of: rollover, head-on, death of other, >55mph

Physical Exam:

- GCS <14
- Positive midline neck tenderness
- Torticollis or limited range of motion
- Midline injury
- Distracting injury
- Substantial injury to chest/abdomen/pelvis on admission

**If any present (yes)-
go to Step 2**

**No (to all above) -
clear c-spine**

STEP 2:

IF ANY PRESENT
ASK FOR:

Lateral C Spine X-ray if:

- GCS 14+
OR
- GCS 9-13 anticipated to improve to 14+ within 24 hrs

Non-con C spine CT if:

- GCS <9
OR
- GCS 9-13 unlikely to improve in 24 hrs

STEP 3:

NEXT
STEPS:

Abnormal X-ray: Consult Spine

Normal X-ray +

- No other symptoms: **clear c-spine** if physical exam findings resolve
- GCS 14-15 and no abnormal head position, neck pain or difficulty with head movement: **clear c-spine**
- Midline neck pain:
 - ◇ Maintain collar 2 wks and repeat exam
 - ◇ Flex-ex with at least 30° (read by Attending Radiologist)
 - ◇ **Consult Spine**

Abnormal CT: Consult Spine

Normal CT +

- Anticipate GCS 14+ w/in 72 hrs—repeat exam
 - ◇ Exam normal: **clear c-spine**
 - ◇ **Exam abnormal: Consult Spine**
- Unlikely to be GCX 14+ w/in 72 hrs—**MRI**

**Abnormal MRI:
Consult Spine**

**Normal MRI:
Clear C-spine**

