

Thoracolumbar Spine Fracture Diagnosis

Plain x-rays of the thoracic and lumbar spine are essential to adequately evaluate a Thoracolumbar spine fracture. It is sometimes difficult to see a non-displaced or minimally displaced fracture or instability, therefore a Computed Tomography (CT) scan is usually ordered. Also to screen for chest and/or abdominal visceral injury.

For accurate classification, radiographs alone were insufficient except for C-type injuries. CT is mandatory for accurately classifying Thoracolumbar spine fractures. Though MRI did confer a modest gain in sensitivity in B2 injuries, the study does not support the need for routine MRI in patients for classification, assessing instability or need for surgery ¹⁾.

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Rajasekaran S, Vaccaro AR, Kanna RM, Schroeder GD, Oner FC, Vialle L, Chapman J, Dvorak M, Fehlings M, Shetty AP, Schnake K, Maheshwaran A, Kandziora F. The value of CT and MRI in the classification and surgical decision-making among spine surgeons in thoracolumbar spinal injuries. Eur Spine J. 2017 May;26(5):1463-1469. doi: 10.1007/s00586-016-4623-0. Epub 2016 Jun 1. PubMed PMID: 27250728.

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Last update: **2024/06/07 02:55**

