DO NOT FORGET · THE SHORT CHECKLIST

Lateral cervical spine X-ray interpretation



A systematic reading sequence for the lateral cervical spine radiograph to detect fractures, malalignment and soft-tissue signs of injury.

EM Orbit

Patient reference	Date	Time	Completed by

The 4 steps that must not be missed

- [ ] BEFORE
Keep spinal motion restriction in place while the image is being read.

- [ ] BEFORE
If C7/T1 is not seen, request a repeat view (e.g. swimmer's view) or CT; do not call the film normal.

- [ ] DURING
Correlate the findings with the clinical examination; a normal radiograph does not exclude injury.
If clinical suspicion remains (midline tenderness, neurology, high-risk mechanism), keep precautions and request CT.

- [ ] AFTER
If an injury is seen or suspected, maintain full spinal motion restriction and request CT.

The short list: an aid to memory, not the whole procedure. The full checklist is at the QR code. It does not replace your local protocol or your clinical judgement.