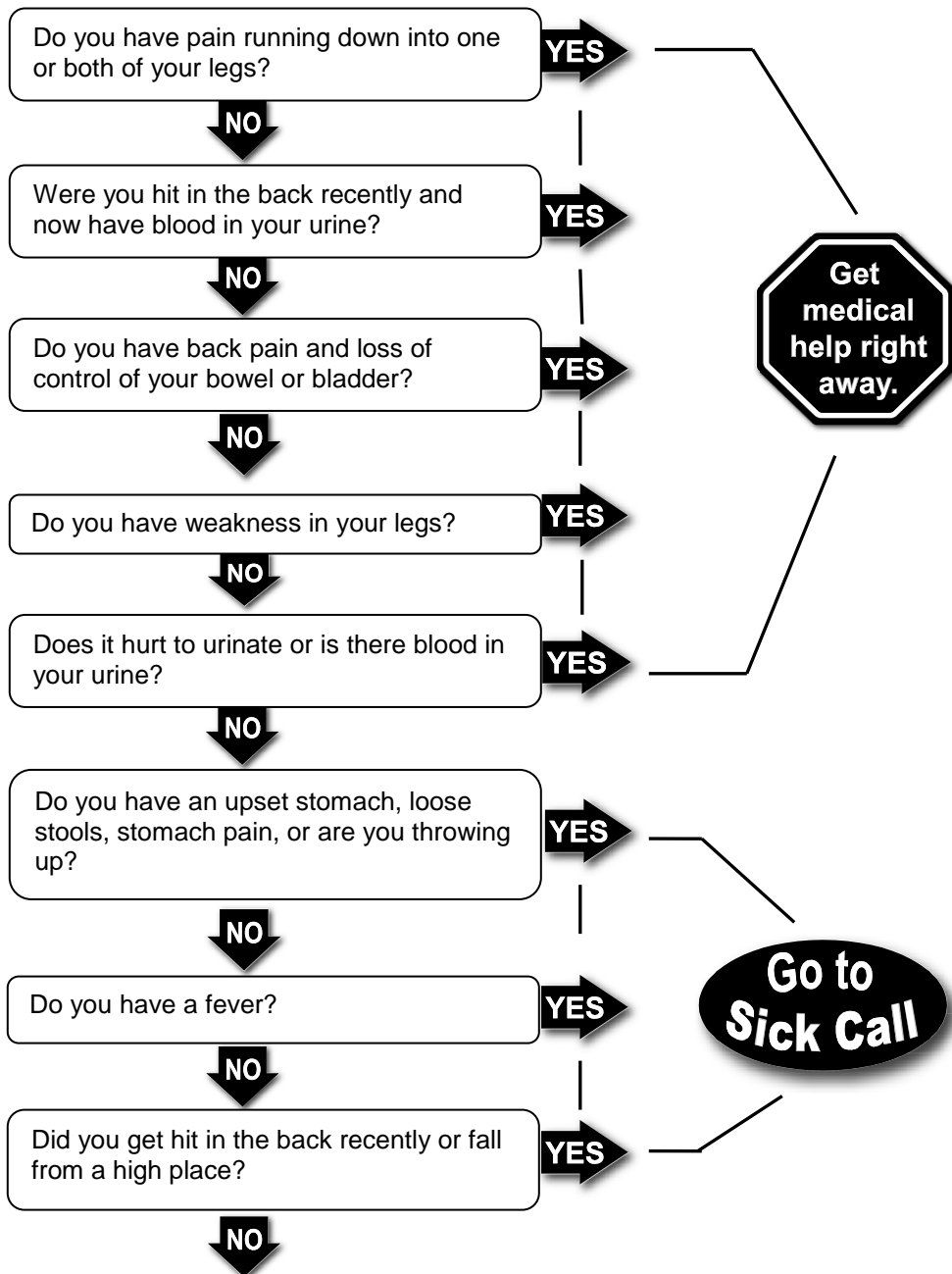


These instructions are to be used as part of the Self-care Program. The following diagram can help you decide if your ailment is minor enough to be treated with Self-care measures without seeing a healthcare provider. This information is not for clinical use.

1. Start at the top of the diagram.
2. Answer each symptom evaluation question in order by following the appropriate YES or NO arrow.
3. If you answer NO to all questions it is probably appropriate for you to use self-care measures.
4. You are the best judge of your own health. If you are having trouble performing your duties or have a symptom that is not listed, see a healthcare provider.

## Self-care Instructions for Back Pain

Back pain, especially in the lower back, is very common in Soldiers. You will feel pain or stiffness in your upper, middle, or lower back. Back pain can be caused by many things, such as an injury, bad posture, or sleeping on a too-soft mattress. If your back hurts, use this symptom evaluation chart.



Continued on next page

## **Back pain - continued**

Use self-care measures:

- Use an over-the-counter pain reliever such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or aspirin as directed.
- Put a cold pack on your back for 20 minutes. Repeat every 2 to 3 hours during the first day or two. You can make a cold pack by wrapping ice in a towel. Don't put ice directly on your skin – this can cause ice burns.
- A heating pad or hot compress may help relieve the pain after the first few days.
- A bed board, an extra firm mattress, or sleeping on a mattress on the floor may help.
- The best treatment is prevention: Once you feel better, start an exercise program to strengthen the muscles of the stomach and back.

**Go to sick call if you cannot perform your duties. Follow the chart if you get any of the symptoms listed.**