

Back injury program

80 per cent of adults will experience back pain. Back injuries can be painful and hard to cope with—we are here to help. The good news is, most back injuries will see improvement without medical support.

The back injury program is available to your injured employee should he/she need additional support. This program promotes early, safe and sustainable return to work by creating a customized back care plan. This plan focuses on providing the right service at the right time in order to help your injured employee.

Who should receive a back exam?

This exam—requested by either the adjudicator or case manager—is done when the primary work-related injury is the back (including the cervical spine) and there are certain indicators which tell us additional support may be needed. These indicators can include:

- Your injured employee is not progressing with treatment or through modified work.
- The treatment recommendation is bed rest.
- There is an increase in symptoms.
- Your injured employee has a history of back claims/injuries.

What is a back medical examination (BME)?

A BME is a medical assessment performed by a physician who has received specialized training in assessing and treating backs. The assessment includes:

- A comprehensive history and physical examination.
- Coordination of any required diagnostics or further medical services.
- Education for your injured employee about the injury and the RTW process.
- Contact with the treating physician to obtain treatment consensus.
- Development of a medical treatment plan.

What are the benefits to having a BME?

There are several benefits to your employee having a BME. They are:

- Confirmation of the diagnosis.
- Early identification of your employee's rehabilitation needs.
- A focus on promoting an early, safe and sustainable return to work.
- Early identification and support of modified return to work opportunities.
- Education about the return-to-work process for your employee, which helps encourage his/her focus on recovery and return to normal activities.
- Communication between the back medical examiner and outside treating physician to explain and agree on the diagnosis and return to work plan supports.

What are the recommendations that could come out of a BME?

The BME examiner should outline one of three options for your employee:

1. Regular medical treatment, usually combining normal activity including work activity as well as a combination of physical therapies, based upon what is best for your employee's situation
2. Further diagnostic testing if it is likely to change the treatment recommendation or when surgery is being considered.

3. Referral to a spine surgeon in complex cases or when surgery is probable. In most cases, your employee would be assessed by a spine surgeon who assesses whether surgery would help (a Spine Surgery Review, or SSR). If so, then your employee is assessed by a different surgeon who will perform the operation (the Visiting Specialist Clinic). WCB ensures that your employee's assessments are thorough so that surgery is the right option.

95% of workers who go through the back program return to work by 12 weeks post-accident.

