

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 you if you 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 you.

Who should receive a back exam?

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

- You are not progressing with treatment or through modified work (changes to your job so you can work while you recover).
- The treatment recommendation is bed rest.
- There is an increase in your symptoms.
- You have 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 you about the injury and the return-to-work 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 you having a BME. They are:

- Confirmation of the diagnosis.
- Early identification of your 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 you, which helps encourage you focus on recovery and return to normal activities.
- Communication between the back medical examiner and your 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 you:

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 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, you would be assessed by a spine surgeon who assesses whether surgery would help you (a Spine Surgery Review, or SSR). If so, then you are assessed by a different surgeon who will perform your operation (the Visiting Specialist Clinic). WCB ensures that your assessments are thorough so that you are confident that surgery is the right option for you.

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

