

Permanent clinical impairment (PCI)

What is PCI?

If you suffered a work-related injury or illness that has had a permanent impact on your function, you may be eligible for PCI benefits.

PCI is meant to recognize:

- Loss of a body part,
- Loss of the use of a body part, system or function, or
- A measurable change or disfigurement to any body part, system or function.

Your clinical impairment will be evaluated after you have reached the point of maximum medical recovery.

Determining PCI

The degree of your clinical impairment will be determined by a documentary review of the information on your file or by an in-person evaluation arranged by the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB). The medical reporting on your file will be reviewed and, if sufficient objective clinical information related to impairment is available, a PCI calculation will be completed. If there is not sufficient objective clinical information, WCB will arrange an in-person evaluation with a physiotherapist or a physician to determine next steps.

The PCI evaluation

An evaluation is done when enough time has passed to allow you to reach your maximum medical recovery. The time frame varies depending on the type of injury/illness, but it can take up to two years or more to arrive at a recovery level that is considered permanent.

The time period is based on guidelines of standardized healing times. For example, it generally takes two years for a nerve to heal so if your nerves are damaged, we will need to wait two years before assessing your injury.

Your adjudicator or case manager will advise you if an in-person evaluation is required to determine your PCI. Ask your adjudicator or case manager if you have any questions about your PCI evaluation.

What to expect during an in-person PCI evaluation

A PCI evaluation is different than a regular physical examination as the examining physician or physiotherapist is not asked to provide an opinion on causation or fitness to work. The evaluator will ask you relevant questions about your injury, and provide objective information on your functional abilities, such as measuring the range of motion for a limb injury. The evaluation itself may take only a few minutes.

How is the PCI evaluation used to determine the PCI rating?

Once the evaluation is complete (documentary or in-person), the results are given to one of our medical consultants specially trained in rating PCI. The medical consultant will review the results and apply the approved WCB-Alberta rating schedule (Alberta Permanent Clinical Impairment Guidelines) to recommend a percentage of whole body impairment for your injury.

Where the guidelines do not adequately address your impairment, the medical consultant will then refer to the American Medical Association Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment.

The medical consultant will provide a final percentage number of whole body impairment. The percentage is then used to calculate the corresponding financial award, called a non-economic loss payment (NELP).

The guidelines already include the usual effects of the injury, such as pain, scarring or local loss of sensation or strength in the calculations. Only unexpected or additional effects may result in adjustments to the impairment rating. Additional ratings for pain do not apply.

Non-economic loss payment (NELP)

The medical consultant's percentage recommendation is sent to your adjudicator or case manager to translate the percentage into a NELP payment.

A NELP is awarded to you if medical evidence tells us you have a permanent clinical impairment relating to an injury/illness that occurred on or after Jan. 1, 1995.

A NELP is a one-time payment. This payment acknowledges that your injury has had a permanent effect on your life outside of work. Additional benefits such as for the loss of ability to work or loss of earnings, supports and accommodation for injury effects, and treatment costs are provided during the claim process and are not part of the NELP award.

The PCI can be reassessed if your condition worsens in the future.

Information about benefits that recognize loss of earnings can be found [here](#).

