

About Workers' Compensation

In Western Australia each year, approximately 1 out of every 100 workers have work-related pain that results in a workers' compensation claim and requires at least one week off work. The good news is that around 80% of people manage to return to work.

'Sprains and strains' account for >50% of work-related pain and are most common among workers involved in manual labour. The low back / spine is most frequently affected region, but the upper limbs and lower limbs are also affected.

A typical workers' compensation claim process

In Western Australia, when people experience work related pain (that is not a medical emergency), the typical process for management is:

1. You notify the relevant person at your work
2. You may receive some initial first-aid
3. Your employer fills out an incident form with you
4. You are recommended to see your doctor
5. Your doctor provides you with an initial diagnosis; a decision about whether work significantly contributed to your pain; a decision about whether you are able to continue working, a plan for management and a First Certificate of Capacity
6. You then complete a Workers' Compensation Claim Form and submit these forms to your employer to lodge a claim with their insurer
7. Assuming your claim is accepted, you will then receive appropriate medical care and support to return to work as soon as possible

Below is a table that shows each person's role in helping you co-manage your work related pain.

Team Member	Role in supporting workers with work-related pain
You	Person with work related pain. Be proactive - engage in recommended management and keep positive
Employer	Managers and / or specific injury management staff. Open communication and supporting return to work
Treating doctor	Responsible for helping managing medical care and return to work planning in liaison with the employer and other team
Insurance company	Responsible for helping you recover and return to work as soon as practical. Claims managers are the main point of contact and manage the claim. Injury management advisors may become involved in helping optimise the medical care
Health care providers	Doctors, medical specialists, physiotherapists, psychologists, occupational therapists, exercise physiologists and other allied health practitioners who may be involved in providing health care and rehabilitation services
Independent medical specialists	These may be occupational physicians or other medical specialists who are requested to make assessments regarding a person's capacity for work, further treatment requirements or in a small number of cases, an estimate of permanent disability
Rehabilitation provider	These may be appointed by your doctor, employer or insurer to help people with ongoing work-related pain develop a return to work program or in some instances source appropriate alternate duties or employment. Your rehabilitation provider can liaise you and your employer regarding when you are able to return to work and any conditions you should observe on your return.
Lawyer	In a small number of cases, WorkCover WA or lawyers may be used to represent the injured worker in disputes claims or to help negotiate a settlement of a claim. More information about claim disputes is available on the WorkCover WA

About Insurance Companies

Keep in mind that insurance companies are not the enemy. They can actually be a very helpful resource in your recovery – so it is very important that you try and work with them. It's in the insurance company's best interest to support you to get back to work and recover as soon as possible.

Useful Resources

Workcover WA resources for injured workers

<http://www.workcover.wa.gov.au/workers/understanding-your-rights-obligations-entitlements/>

Workcover WA resources for employers

<http://www.workcover.wa.gov.au/employers/>