

Sometimes it is necessary to have an independent review of medical information to ensure all steps are taken to improve your chances of recovery, remaining at or returning to work.

There is compelling evidence that work plays a vital role in our physical and mental health. For most people, work is good for their health and wellbeing. Remaining at or returning to work can be a crucial part of an injured worker's rehabilitation. A supportive workplace can help reduce the financial and emotional impact of an injury on workers and their families.

Some workers who have a permanent impairment because of a work-related injury or illness may need to be referred to a permanent impairment medical assessor (see our *Permanent impairment* fact sheet for further information).

The information received from the independent medical examination (IME), in the form of a medical report, may help determine the nature, extent or likely duration of your work-related injury or illness. Alternatively, the information received may provide another opinion about appropriate treatment or your capacity for certain types of work.

The specialist who conducts the IME will send a copy of their report to your case manager, who will forward a copy to you within seven days. Your employer is also entitled to see a copy of the report if they ask for it. The information in the report is confidential. If you have any concerns about IMEs, talk to your case manager.

Who are independent medical examiners?

Independent medical examiners are medical specialists registered with the Medical Board of Australia. They are not employees or representatives of WorkCover. An independent medical examiner's role is different to that of your treating medical practitioner.

An independent medical examiner's role is to review your medical condition and/or treatment and provide comment. Your medical treatment remains the responsibility of your treating doctor and any other health professionals that you and your doctor have chosen.

Who arranges the examination?

Usually the request to attend an IME will come from your case manager – they will arrange the appointment and let you know the details. You are required to attend the appointment and you will need to bring copies of the relevant X-rays or tests as requested. If you cannot attend for any reason, you will need to contact your case manager (a minimum of 48 hours notice prior to the appointment is preferred).

If you unreasonably miss an appointment your weekly payments (income maintenance) may be stopped and you may also be asked to pay for the cost of the missed appointment. Travel and overnight accommodation can be arranged where required eg, where you must travel to Adelaide from the country for the examination, or where you require transport due to a medical need. Talk to your case manager about reimbursement of agreed travel or accommodation expenses.

Who attends the examination?

You and the doctor will be present. Either of you may request that a doctor's nurse or attendant be present at your physical examination.

You may also wish to bring a relative, friend or representative with you. If this person is present, they are not to take an active part in the examination, and are not to act as an interpreter. If you are deaf, have a hearing impairment or speak a language other than English, you can request that an interpreter attend the appointment through your case manager.

What will the examination involve?

The independent medical examiner should begin by explaining the purpose and nature of the examination and their role. They will then ask you questions and, where necessary, perform an examination to identify:

- the medical history of your injury
- past medical or psychological history
- occupational history (eg, your duties at the time of injury, whether you have returned to work, your capacity for work)
- treatment(s) provided
- current symptoms and medication
- any personal, past occupational or social history, if relevant
- present daily activities and interests.

Where an independent medical examiner feels that further tests or investigations are needed, they will first request this of your case manager.

What responsibilities does the independent medical examiner have?

The independent medical examiner must obtain your consent to any physical examination before proceeding. They are expected to have an unbiased view of your case and are required to provide a report on your medical condition based on evidence obtained as a result of the examination.

This report will be factual and usually contain medical terminology. If an independent medical examiner has an urgent concern regarding your injury or health, they should alert your treating medical practitioner.

What course of action can you take if you are unhappy with the examination?

If you have concerns about the examination or report, please contact your case manager as soon as possible to discuss your issues.

Alternatively, you may choose to discuss your concerns with your general practitioner, contact a representative acting on your behalf (such as your union), the WorkCover Ombudsman on (08) 8463 6593 or contact WorkCover's Client Services Unit on 13 18 55.

Enquiries: 13 18 55

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Free information support services are available for: TTY (deaf or have hearing/speech impairments) call (08) 8233 2574. Languages other than English call the Interpreting and Translating Centre (08) 8226 1990 and ask for an interpreter to call WorkCoverSA on 13 18 55. Braille, audio, or e-text call 13 18 55. The information in this publication is compiled by WorkCover Corporation of South Australia. The data and facts referred to are correct at the time of publishing and provided as general information only. It is not intended that any opinion as to the meaning of legislation referred to is to be relied upon by readers who should seek independent advice as to any specific issues relevant to you, your workplace or organisation. © WorkCover Corporation of South Australia, 2011