

What to do if you experience a musculoskeletal disorder

OHS information for workers

KEY INFORMATION

- Tell your employer about any injury you believe has resulted from your work – it is both your right and your responsibility to do so.
- Seek medical attention as necessary and work with your employer, treatment provider(s) and WCB-Alberta to ensure your recovery and ability to resume regular work activity.

This bulletin provides information on steps to take when you are experiencing an injury to muscles, ligaments, bones, tendons or nerves. These are also known as musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) or musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs). This bulletin does not include information for more serious injury events that require first aid or transport to a medical treatment facility.

If you are injured at work, as a worker you have specific rights and obligations under the *Workers' Compensation Act* and occupational health and safety (OHS) laws. Also, following best practices can maintain positive relations and support your recovery and return to work.

Tell your employer

Tell your employer as soon as you notice any musculoskeletal symptoms arising from work. Symptoms may include pain, swelling, redness of a body area, reduced range of motion, tingling, numbness, burning sensation, or tenderness to the touch. Pain can be the first sign of exposure to a hazard that has not been properly eliminated or controlled. It is important for your employer to be aware of these situations to protect you and prevent others from having a similar injury.

After receiving notice, your employer is required by law to report the injury to WCB-Alberta within 72 hours. Your employer will need to investigate and put in measures to minimize or eliminate the hazard(s) that contributed to your injury.



Seek medical attention

You may require medical attention. Talk to your health care providers and make sure you get the right treatment at the right time – it's important to your recovery. Recovery is generally faster if MSD symptoms are identified and addressed early.

Be sure to tell your health care provider if you were injured at work or believe your injury is from your work. You are entitled to receive copies of your medical information from your health care providers. They can also provide medical restriction information to you and your employer to help support a plan for return to work activities.

Report to WCB-Alberta

If you have been injured at work, it's your right and responsibility to report it to WCB-Alberta. Workers' compensation benefits cover work-related injuries or diseases. This includes coordinating your recovery and return to work.



MSDs can be considered work-related and should be reported. The sooner WCB-Alberta gets your information, the faster they can help you return to the job and feel like yourself again.

Work with your employer, treatment provider and WCB-Alberta

To best support your recovery process, work with your employer, treatment provider(s) and WCB-Alberta. Both you and your employer are required to cooperate with each other and WCB-Alberta for safely returning to work.

It is best practice to take an active role in your treatment and recovery. Modified work is a safe way to resume your job and can support your recovery. Talk to your doctor and employer to find things you can do safely at work while recovering. Be involved in the steps needed for your recovery and decisions related to your return to work activities.



About the OHS Prevention Initiative

The [OHS Prevention Initiative](#) is a partnership between the Alberta government, employers, workers, health and safety associations, labor organizations, service providers (consultants, trainers and auditors) and WCB-Alberta. Its aim is preventing workplace injury and illness.

Contributors to this resource

Alberta Food Processors Association
 Alberta Forest Products Association
 Alberta Municipal Health and Safety Association
 Bird Construction Company Ltd.
 Energy Safety Canada
 EWI Works International Ltd.
 Health Sciences Association of Alberta
 United Nurses of Alberta
 Western Wood Truss Association of Alberta
 Workers' Compensation Board of Alberta

For more information

WCB-Alberta – Worker handbook
wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/workers/worker_handbook.pdf

When an injury happens – WCB
wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/employers/123_english.pdf

Report an injury to WCB-Alberta
wcb.ab.ca/claims/report-an-injury/for-workers.html

Other resources

Government of Alberta OHS resource portal
ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/

WCB-Alberta – Employer handbook
wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/employers/employer_handbook.pdf

WCB-Alberta – Employer injury report
wcb.ab.ca/claims/report-an-injury/for-employers.html

WCB-Alberta – Forms and guides
wcb.ab.ca/resources/for-employers/forms-and-guides/

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