

# Model of care for the management of low back pain — Summary

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Model of care for the management of low back pain — Summary (the Summary Model)?

[The Summary Model](#) is an up to date, evidence-informed guide for primary care clinicians on best practice management of low back pain.

- it encourages self-management, return to work and usual activity, empowering the person in their recovery journey
- it promotes a holistic and person-centred approach through risk stratification for all injured people with lower back pain
- it recommends that people who worked before injury to use work as part of their recovery, by talking to their doctor and employer about what they can do at work which can help them keep active and recover.

### Why is SIRA introducing the Summary Model?

People with low back pain have been identified as a priority group in SIRA's implementation of value-based healthcare.

Recent SIRA funded research has found sub-optimal outcomes for people with low back pain in the workers compensation scheme who receive surgery. These outcomes included:

- high cost of surgery with an average cost for a surgical episode of \$46,000 for spinal fusion and \$20,000 for spinal decompression
- high rates of additional surgery with one in five people receiving at least one reoperation within two years
- low return to work rates with only 19% of spinal fusions and 39% of spinal decompression patients returning to work in full capacity within two years.

### How was the Summary Model developed?

The Summary Model is a summary based on the NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI) existing model: [Management of people with the acute low back pain: model of care](#). The State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) and the ACI created a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate the revision, design, implementation and evaluation of the Management of people with the acute low back pain: model of care resources to ensure consistency across government organisations.

SIRA convened its Back Injury Clinical Advisory Group, the ACI and its expert groups, to review the Model and create the Model of care for the management of low back pain-Summary. The revision includes current evidence and promotes consistency in care of all people experiencing low back pain and avoidance of low value care, whether their back pain is compensable or not.

### Who is the Summary Model for?

The Summary Model is for:

- people with low back pain in NSW
- health professionals to guide the provision of healthcare to people with low back pain.

## Does the Summary Model direct or limit the services people in the schemes are able to receive?

The Summary Model champions best practice and is a guide for practitioners caring for people with low back pain, and insurers managing claims for people with low back pain. The Summary Model uses 10 key principles to promote best practice for people with low back pain.

Insurers must not instruct or direct primary health care providers on how to treat an injured person, or to direct a general practitioner to make a referral in accordance with the medical pathways. However, insurers can encourage general practitioners and primary healthcare practitioners to adopt the Summary Model.

The primary care practitioner is guided through the Summary Model so that people are triaged appropriately and referrals to musculoskeletal specialists or other specialist care is made in line with the Summary Model of care.

## Does the Summary Model direct the type of health practitioners who are able to provide services in the schemes?

The Summary Model is written for the primary care team, whose members include:

- the patient and their family member, carer, friend or consumer advocate
- the treating general practitioner and practice nurse
- treating allied health practitioners.

In most circumstances the Summary Model describes evidence informed treatments, rather than specific healthcare professionals. This is to champion best practice and not to include or exclude health practitioners. This is in line with current clinical practice guidance documents and supports primary care to use person centred care approach and focus on individual circumstances when applying the Summary Model.

The Summary Model does however recommend referral to a musculoskeletal specialist at different time points when there is no improvement or symptoms are worsening. The Summary Model defines the musculoskeletal specialist as the following health practitioners who may be considered for referral: specialist physiotherapist, cognitive behaviour therapy trained physiotherapist, rheumatologist, spine surgeon, exercise and sports physician or pain or rehabilitation physician, clinical psychologist. However, this list is not exhaustive.

## Value-based healthcare at SIRA

The Summary Model is a value-based healthcare initiative that will enable SIRA to support enhanced clinical practice across CTP and WC schemes.

Value-based healthcare is defined as achieving measurable improvements in a patient's meaningful health outcomes relative to the resources utilised in achieving those improvements.

The Summary Model will support people to receive value-based healthcare through the early assessment, management, review and appropriate referral of people with back injury in the NSW personal injury schemes.

## Where do I find resources?

Links to:

- [Model of care for the management of low back pain - Summary](#)
- [Managing back pain. Information for patients.](#)
- [Community language translations](#)
- SIRA [Standardised outcome measures](#)
- SIRA [Clinical framework](#)
- SIRA [Healthcare reform](#)
- Tile on SIRA [Treatment Advice Centre](#)
- SIRA [Implementation plan for value-based healthcare in NSW WC and CTP schemes](#)
- Agency for Clinical Innovation [Management of people with acute low back pain](#) (the full Model of Care)