

Model of care for the management of low back pain – Summary

Frequently Asked Questions for employers

What is the Model of care for the management of low back pain – Summary (the Summary Model) and how does it help people with a low back injury?

[The Summary Model](#) is a guide written for health practitioners caring for people with low back pain injury.

It encourages patients to keep moving, try to return to normal activities as much as they can and use work as part of their recovery.

It provides patients with the following information:

- serious conditions are very rare
- remember that most people don't need scans
- to keep moving – it's the best thing to do
- use simple pain relief strategies
- follow up with your local health professional
- remind yourself that most people get better with time.

What does this mean for employers?

- Workers will get the right care, at the right time.
- Employers are encouraged to find suitable work (as far as reasonably practicable) so that the worker can recover at work.
- Early contact with the treating doctor is encouraged to discuss what the worker's normal duties were and what suitable duties are available for the worker to help them keep active and recover at work.
- Employers should arrange a case conference for people at risk for delayed recovery. The aim of the conference is to set goals, ensure roles and responsibilities are understood and to agree on timeframes to recover at or return to work.

How was the Summary Model developed?

SIRA convened a group of clinical experts to provide expert input and advice into the development and implementation of evidence-informed standards and education for the management of back injuries, whether compensable or not.

The Summary Model is based on the NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI) [Management of people with acute low back pain: model of care](#).

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.

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.

Employer's legal obligations

Under NSW workers compensation legislation, every employer is required to:

- participate in the development of the worker's injury management plan, written by your insurer and comply with your obligations within it.
- provide suitable work (as far as reasonably practicable) when a worker is able to return to work, either on a full-time or part-time basis.

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](#)
- 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)