

Independent medical examinations

What is an Independent Medical Examination?

An independent medical examination is an examination conducted by a WorkSafe Victoria (WorkSafe) approved medical practitioner or allied healthcare professional.

Independent medical examination reports provide information to your WorkSafe Agent or self-insurer¹ that can be used to support your recovery, rehabilitation and return to work. Independent medical examination reports may also be used to help inform a decision about your entitlement to weekly payments and medical and like services.

You may be required to attend an independent medical examination conducted by a medical practitioner, physiotherapist, psychologist, osteopath, chiropractor or dentist.

Who is an Independent Medical Examiner?

Independent medical examiners are independent healthcare professionals, approved by WorkSafe based on strict criteria. They work in private practice or hospitals, in addition to performing independent medical examinations.

Independent medical examiners are not employees or representatives of WorkSafe, its Agents or self-insurers, however, they are paid by WorkSafe Agents and self-insurers to examine injured workers and provide independent medical advice.

Independent medical examiners are subject to a rigorous quality assurance program by WorkSafe to ensure the ongoing quality of their work.

What does an Independent Medical Examiner do?

An independent medical examiner's role is to review your medical condition and/or treatment and provide WorkSafe Agents and self-insurers with an independent medical opinion about your injury or illness. They do not provide you with treatment.

Do I have to attend an Independent Medical Examination?

You must attend an independent medical examination that is arranged for you. If you are unable to attend the examination, you must contact your WorkSafe Agent or self-insurer to discuss alternative arrangements. The Victorian workers compensation legislation authorises WorkSafe Agents and self-insurers to request injured workers attend independent medical examiners at reasonable intervals.

If you unreasonably refuse to attend or co-operate during an examination, your WorkSafe entitlements may be suspended until the examination takes place. You may also lose any weekly payments you would have been entitled to receive until you do attend an examination and co-operate with the examiner.

How often do I need to attend an Independent Medical Examination?

If you make a WorkSafe claim, you may be asked to attend an independent medical examination at reasonable intervals. What is a 'reasonable interval' will depend on the nature of your injury and the entitlements you are claiming or receiving. You may have to attend more than one examination. For example, a worker may need to attend an examination with an orthopaedic surgeon and a neurosurgeon. If you have any questions about how often you need to attend an independent medical examination, contact your WorkSafe Agent or self-insurer.

Who arranges the Examination?

An independent medical examination may be organised by one of the following:

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| ✓ | your WorkSafe Agent or self-insurer, or |
| ✓ | lawyers representing your Agent or self-insurer. |

You may be contacted by telephone to discuss the purpose of the examination, the specialty of the examiner, and any other arrangements. You will receive a letter from your

¹ Self-insurers are employers that are responsible for managing their own WorkSafe claims

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Agent or self-insurer confirming these details.

If you need special assistance with travel or access requirements, you should advise the person arranging the examination.

Who will be at the Examination?

A relative or friend can accompany you to the examination rooms, but it is up to the independent medical examiner whether they can be present during the examination. If you prefer a support person to be present, speak to your Agent or self-insurer before attending the appointment. A psychologist or psychiatrist examiner will rarely allow a family member or friend to attend an examination because of the personal nature of the questions that may be asked. The family member or friend may speak to the examiner after the consultation.

If a physical examination is needed, you may ask another person to be present during that part of the examination. When another person is present, he or she should not take an active part in the examination. The independent medical examiner may also have a nurse or attendant present.

Children should not be present during the examination as they may distract you or the examiner. If it is unavoidable that a child goes with you, another person should come to supervise the child while you are being examined.

What if I need an interpreter?

If you have a hearing impairment or speak a language other than English, you can ask your Agent or self-insurer to arrange for a professional interpreter to attend the examination. It is important for you and the independent medical examiner that a professional interpreter is used. A family member or friend should not act as your interpreter. Children under the age of 18 years cannot act as an interpreter.

What do I need to take to the Examination?

You should take any information that may help the independent medical examiner assess your condition. This may include:

✓	x-rays
✓	scans
✓	reports

The examiner may have already read or reviewed some of your documents. If the examiner needs results or reports you don't have with you, you may be asked to sign a

consent form. This will either authorise the release of information directly to the examiner or authorise your healthcare provider to discuss your details with them.

What if I am running late for the Independent Medical Examination?

It is important that you are on time. You should allow plenty of time to get to the location of the examination. If you are running late, you should ring the examiner's rooms or contact the person who arranged the examination.

What if the examiner is running late?

The independent medical examiner is expected to see you on time, but emergency or unscheduled work may cause delay. The examiner's receptionist should let you know how long you may have to wait. If there is a delay, you should wait at least 30 minutes from the arranged appointment time (not the time you arrived). Leaving any earlier may be considered unreasonable and could put your entitlements at risk. If you decide to leave after waiting the recommended time, you should immediately notify the person who arranged the examination.

What will happen at the Independent Medical Examination?

The examiner will ask you a number of questions about your injury during the examination. These questions may be about:

- the medical history of your injury (for example, what treatment you received and the results of that treatment)
- your work history (for example, your duties at the time of your injury, whether you have returned to work, or your capacity for work)
- treatment you have had or are receiving
- your current symptoms
- your relevant personal or social history
- your daily activities and interests.

As part of the examination, an independent medical examiner may ask you questions that do not directly relate to your injury. It may be necessary to ask you in-depth questions about your family and personal history to better understand your circumstances. These types of questions are more likely to be asked by psychologists and psychiatrists.

The independent medical examiner may need to conduct a

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physical examination to properly assess your injury. The examiner must obtain your consent before conducting the physical examination. You should wear clothing that will allow the examiner to easily examine your injury.

If you are required to remove your clothing for the examination, the examiner should provide you with a gown or sheet for cover. If a gown or sheet is not provided, you may ask the examiner to provide one.

Examiners may request that you remove the gown or sheet during the examination so they can conduct a thorough examination. The examiner may find it necessary to examine other parts of your body that may not appear to relate to your injury.

The examiner is required to protect your modesty as far as practical.

Why would I be asked to attend an Independent Medical Examination with a Psychologist or Psychiatrist?

Injured workers may be asked to attend an independent medical examination with a psychologist or psychiatrist to assist with your recovery, rehabilitation and return to work. To ensure your claim is managed effectively and efficiently, you should co-operate with the examiner. You may ask questions during the examination and if you feel uncomfortable with any part of the examination, you should tell the examiner.

If you are unsure why you were asked to attend a psychological or psychiatric examination, talk to your Agent or self-insurer.

Who will receive a copy of the report?

The independent medical examiner will prepare a report based on the examination. The examiner will send a copy of their report to the person who arranged the examination. If you wish to obtain a copy of the report, you should request this in writing from the person who arranged the examination.

What does WorkSafe require of the independent medical examiner?

WorkSafe requires independent medical examiners to:

✓	explain the purpose of the examination
✓	explain their role as an independent medical examiner
✓	explain their specialty and its relevance to the examination

✓	explain how you will be examined
✓	be polite
✓	be professional
✓	be sensitive to your concerns
✓	obtain your consent to any physical examination before proceeding, and
✓	answer any questions you have about the examination.

What costs can I claim?

You may be entitled to claim the reasonable costs of travel to attend the examination. Depending on the time of the examination and the distance to be travelled you may also be entitled to the reasonable costs of accommodation. These costs must be approved by your WorkSafe Agent or self-insurer before you make any arrangements.

Talk to your Agent or self-insurer to find out what costs you can claim and discuss any special travel requirements you may have.

Who do I contact if I am unhappy with the Independent Medical Examination?

If you have any concerns during the examination, talk to the examiner. If you are unhappy about the way the independent medical examination was conducted, contact the WorkSafe Advisory Service on freecall 1800 136 089, or (03) 9641 1444, or at worksafe.vic.com.au.

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WorkSafe Victoria

WorkSafe Agents

Agent contact details are available at
worksafe.vic.gov.au/agents

Advisory Service

Phone.....(03) 9641 1444
Toll-free..... 1800 136 089
Email.....info@worksafe.vic.gov.au

Head Office

222 Exhibition Street
Melbourne 3000
Phone.....(03) 9641 1444
Toll-free..... 1800 136 089
Website.....worksafe.vic.gov.au

For information about WorkSafe in your own language, call our Talking your Language service

廣東話.....	1300 559 141
Ελληνικά.....	1300 650 535
Македонски.....	1300 661 494
Italiano.....	1300 660 210
普通话.....	1300 662 373
Српски.....	1300 722 595
Español.....	1300 724 101
Türkçe.....	1300 725 445
Việt Ngữ.....	1300 781 868
العربية.....	1300 554 987
English.....	1300 782 442
Other.....	1300 782 343