

Early Access to Physiotherapy Program

The Early Access to Physiotherapy Program (EAPP) provides workers who have sustained a sprain or strain injury at work with access to a physiotherapist as early as the day of their injury.

The program enables employers who have met the requirements of the EAPP to partner with a physiotherapy clinic (or clinics) in their area. The role of the clinic is to assess and treat injured workers who have suffered soft-tissue strains and sprains, with the goal of helping workers stay at work and recover on the job.

What are employers looking for in partnering with a physiotherapy clinic?

Any employer that meets the criteria of the EAPP can contact your clinic. Employers are looking for a clinic that:

- Is close to their workplace
- Is willing to provide early access to physiotherapy for workers referred under the program
- Has a recovery-at-work and return function approach to treatment and recommendations
- Promotes the concept to workers that staying at work is good for their recovery
- Is part of the Early Access to Physiotherapy Program network

What types of workers are eligible to participate in the EAPP?

Workers who are eligible to participate:

- experienced a recent soft-tissue injury resulting from a specific incident at work
- reported their injury to the employer and WorkSafeBC's Teleclaim service
- are referred to a physiotherapy clinic by their employer within 72 hours of their injury

How does my clinic receive referrals for the EAPP?

Once an agreement is in place between your clinic and an employer, referrals will come directly from the employer. When a worker reports a new soft-tissue workplace injury (a sprain or a strain) the employer will refer them to your clinic for an initial assessment, and a functional abilities assessment with a physiotherapist.

What does an initial assessment involve?

The initial assessment involves a physical and functional assessment of the worker by a physiotherapist and must be initiated within 72 hours of the referral from the employer. As part of the assessment, the physiotherapist will complete the *Physiotherapy Standard Treatment Initial Report form* and submit it to WorkSafeBC.

The physiotherapist will also complete a Functional Abilities Form (FAF), which provides details of the worker's current functional abilities, and assists the employer in offering appropriate modified duties to aid in recovery and allow the worker to safely return to the workplace. This form will be submitted to the employer, WorkSafeBC, and the worker within one business day of the assessment and will be invoiced to WorkSafeBC.

What happens once the initial assessment is complete?

If the worker has an accepted claim, he or she can continue into the Standard Treatment Block. An additional Functional Abilities Form can be submitted, if required, four weeks after the initial assessment.

If the worker's claim status is still pending, you can continue to treat the worker for up to three visits after the initial assessment or until a claim decision is made, whichever occurs first. If the claim is subsequently disallowed, you can invoice the employer for up to three visits as per the *Early Access to Physiotherapy Program agreement* and your stated agreement with the employer.

What other types of services can I provide as part of the EAPP?

Once a worker has an accepted claim with WorkSafeBC, a clinic is eligible to provide ongoing support at the employer's workplace, in the form of coaching and mentoring, to facilitate the worker's modified work plan. This support can be provided by either a physical therapist or a kinesiologist working under the direction of the treating physical therapist.

Your clinic can invoice for these coaching sessions by following the terms outlined in the *Physiotherapy Services Agreement*.

Program benefits

The Early Access to Physiotherapy Program is designed to reduce the time that injured workers wait to receive their initial functional abilities assessment and treatment following a workplace injury. When the employer and physiotherapist work together to identify appropriate modified duties it allows the worker to safely return to the workplace.

Research shows that workers who return to work and stay connected to their job and co-workers recover faster. This allows them to get back to their regular duties sooner, and decreases the chance of re-injury.

“For the majority of soft-tissue injuries, staying active actually promotes healing and recovery. Modified work that is considered safe and reasonable can be a valuable part of the rehabilitation and recovery process.”

Dr. Peter Rothfels,
Chief medical officer WorkSafeBC

How does the Early Access to Physiotherapy Program work?

- If a worker sustains a soft-tissue strain or sprain at work, they will report their injury to their supervisor or first aid attendant and start a claim with WorkSafeBC.
- The employer will refer the worker for an initial assessment (covered by WorkSafeBC) with their partner physiotherapy clinic as early as the day of injury.
- The partner physiotherapy clinic will perform an initial assessment including a functional abilities assessment to determine the worker's ability to perform modified duties.
- The employer offers modified work duties to the injured worker and the worker returns to his or her job during recovery, supported by the partner physiotherapist clinic if necessary.

How does my clinic participate in the program?

Your clinic's participation in the program is dependent upon being pre-qualified by WorkSafeBC (Submitting an RFP for the EAPP) and selected as a partner by an employer that is offering Early Access to Physiotherapy as part of their Recovery at Work Program. Employers are able to work with any physiotherapy clinics who have pre-qualified as an Early Access to Physiotherapy Program provider.

What should I do if an employer contacts me and I'm currently not pre-qualified with WorkSafeBC?

If your clinic has been contacted by an employer to partner with them in the Early Access to Physiotherapy Program and requires more information, contact WorkSafeBC Health Care programs at 1.604.232.7787.