



EARLY INTERVENTION PHYSIOTHERAPY

FAQs

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FAQ'S

What is early intervention physiotherapy (EIP)?

The EIP model is based upon early advice to a worker with ongoing aches, pain or discomfort before a more significant injury occurs.

Qualified physiotherapists speak to the worker through a secure video-link to provide immediate assessment and advice. The treatment process can be started straight away to avoid delays and improve outcomes.

Through the program a physiotherapist will connect with the worker and workplace to deliver:

- Evidence-based assessment and advice to the worker on their musculoskeletal condition
- Education and self-management strategies to the worker including an exercise program
- Timely feedback to the workplace regarding suitable duties, treatment and goals.

To deliver the program we've partnered with Biosymm, a highly experienced early intervention provider, who have run similar programs for organisations such as Bunnings, BHP, Medibank and ATCO Gas with impressive results. We have been working closely with Biosymm for over 4 years and they have an excellent understanding of the WA local government sector.

What is a musculoskeletal injury?

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) are conditions that can affect muscles, bones and joints, such as strain and sprain injuries to the soft tissues in the body. Symptoms can affect any and all major areas of the musculoskeletal system (neck, shoulders, back, wrists, etc.) and are characterised by stiff joints, swelling, dull aches or recurrent pain.

How will it benefit my local government?

Early intervention is about identifying and responding to warning signs and reports of accidents and incidents in the workplace. Responding early can reduce the likelihood of a worker becoming ill or injured, taking long-term sick leave or workers compensation absences. Ensuring early access to treatment has also been shown to reduce the duration and severity of an injury or illness, enhancing recovery and facilitating an early return to work, resulting in lower claims costs and increased productivity. LGIS ran this program as a pilot project with a small number of members, and launched it to the whole sector in 2023. The early signs of success for the scheme and our members is shown through our continued reduced manual task related claims and reduced average cost of workers compensation claims following an early intervention referral.

Who can access the EIP program?

This service is available to all local government employees experiencing acute musculoskeletal aches and pains impacting their ability to perform their work, and allows for quick access to physiotherapy advice and treatment at no cost to the employee.

How do workers access the EIP program?

LGIS will provide some promotional material, including a poster and referral form/QR code to all participating local governments. If a worker would like to participate in the EIP program, they can complete the referral form/scan the QR code, with assistance from their supervisor. Once this referral is completed, it will be sent to LGIS for review and approval via health@lgiswa.com.au. If a worker scans the QR code, they can make an appointment directly with Biosymm, where they will triage the request and streamline the process to a physiotherapy initial assessment. The worker will need to include details of their supervisor, WHS or RTW coordinator, so you will be notified of the referral. If the request does not meet the criteria for the early intervention program, this will be referred to LGIS to see how we may be able to assist through our range of other services.

If approved, the provider (Biosymm) will contact the injured worker to arrange a suitable time for the initial assessment. Once this is confirmed, it is communicated to the workers supervisor and the consult is completed.

Following this, the participating worker will be given treatment options immediately, and the supervisor will be provided with suitable duties for the worker to complete whilst receiving treatment. Biosymm will then manage the treatment plan and provide a progress or final report to all relevant parties, as required.

What's involved in the EIP process?

Initial assessment (Approx. 30 – 60 minute telehealth session)

A physiotherapist will:

1. Assess the worker
2. Educate and provide advice regarding the best treatment for their injury
3. Provide tools and resources to the worker for self-management
4. Provide a report to the local government regarding suitable duties and treatment plan

Ongoing treatment

Up to three (3) physiotherapy treatment sessions are provided either via telehealth or via a local provider network. This includes access to a tailored physiotherapy exercise program. Treatment is focused on providing early intervention strategies for acute musculoskeletal injuries, and providing self-management tips to help your staff get on the road to recovery, and reducing the risk of further injury.

Conclusion

Following the final third appointment, the treating physiotherapist will determine if:

1. The worker has recovered and is ready for discharge

2. A recommendation is made to LGIS for funding additional sessions (case by case)
3. The worker be referred to a GP for further assessment, and if the injury is work-related, a claim may be lodged.

Can we access the EIP for a non-work-related musculoskeletal injury?

Yes, this program encourages workers to report any acute musculoskeletal disorders that are causing them aches, pains or discomfort and/or interfering with their ability to complete required work tasks. It is our understanding that if left untreated, these ailments increase the risk of further injury within the workplace and subsequently a potential workers' compensation claim.

Will I end up with everyone on my team on restricted duties?

No, the program has a high stay at work rate and often restricted duties are not required.

What is required to be involved in the EIP?

Each member that is involved will need to:

- Select a key point of contact to drive the promotion and referral process from within the organisation, usually an injury management, WHS or HR officer is suitable.
- Workers will require access to a computer/video based device to complete the initial assessment, therefore a private meeting room or first aid room location would be recommended to complete the initial assessment.
- Complete a roll-out for the program including;
 - Presentation to supervisors/managers to ensure leaders have an awareness of the program, its purpose, what to expect, and how to refer workers to it (if appropriate).
 - Promotion of the program at team meetings and staff events, and by placing the worker information flyer on information boards and/or intranets.

How much time and resources are needed from my local government?

As with any workplace prevention and wellbeing activity, a small amount of coordination and promotion will be required internally by the local government.

How secure is the video connection?

The telehealth application has been designed specifically for medical consultations with confidentiality and other medico-legal requirements ensured. The video consult is private, secure and not recorded.

Who will pay for the EIP?

LGIS is offering this early intervention services as part of our scheme funded prevention and wellbeing program. LGIS will cover the costs associated with the EIP program from our allocated budget amount. No show appointments may be on-charged to the participant or local government.

Please note - There is limited budget available, and once the funding is exhausted, the service will be unavailable until further notice.

Each member will need to decide what code to use on workers timesheets for time taken to attend treatment sessions, however this shouldn't discourage participation. We would recommend the same code used when workers participate in any prevention and wellbeing or training programs.

More information

For more information and advice, please contact James Larkin, Manager WorkCare Services.

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