



Return-to-work (RTW) outcomes

Physiotherapy (PT) plays an important rehabilitation role in a worker's recovery and RTW.

When an employee isn't working and they start PT, 29% return within 3 weeks and 40% within 4 weeks (WCB-Alberta statistics 2022).

As of April 1, 2022, WCB has approved a standard two-phased PT approach for soft-tissue injuries, allowing more accurate matching between client need and treatment. This is a change from the previous model where WCB approved six weeks of treatment to start and extensions as required.

The model

Tailored care (e.g., in person, virtual or hybrid) and flexible visit frequency to suit individual needs.

Phase 1 – Acute care: The initial authorization period of 4 weeks with treatments up to 3 times per week.

- During this acute phase, clients may need more care and education about their treatment and the benefits of RTW.
- Supported by new reporting at the 2-week mark.

Phase 2 – Extensions: Starting at week 5, up to 2 treatments per week to support transition to a home program and self-management.

Progressive levels of review

Physiotherapist → claim owner (CO) → PT consultant

- 1. Physiotherapist** – can self-extend from 4 weeks to 6 weeks.
- 2. CAPS/ADJ/CM*** – reviews at 4 and 6 weeks (can refer for additional services or continue PT care for up to 9 weeks).
- 3. PT consultant** – can extend recommendations beyond 9 weeks (clinically evaluated).

Based on historical actual number of visits per week this new model is anticipated to result in the right amount of treatment with a reduced length of stay, more triage points and stable costs.

*Claims authorization and processing/adjudicators/case managers.

Reporting

New reporting and increased frequency gives everyone involved more timely information. Here are some key highlights you'll be able to see on the employer-worker report:

Can the patient RTW in some capacity?

No

Estimated date you expect the patient will be able to perform modified work

2022-03-17

Estimated date you expect the patient will be able to perform pre-accident work

2022-04-07

Accommodations/modifications to support sustainable RTW

Modified hours, modified duties, gradual RTW plan, other (e.g., frequent change of position required)

Gradual RTW plan

Mar 17-23/22: Material handling up to a light level, up to 4 hours/day

Mar 24-30/22: Material handling up to a light level, up to 6 hours/day

Mar 31-Apr 6/22: Material handling up to a medium level, up to 6 hours/day

April 7/22: Return to regular hours and duties with no restriction

We heard you!

New reporting features for PTs and COs (based on your feedback):

Reports now show the number of weeks PT treatment has been delivered, as well as home exercise and supplemental home therapy (e.g., hot/cold packs, exercise bands, etc.) recommendations. Ready access to this information ensures PTs and COs are on the same page, working closely together with all stakeholders throughout the claim process.

Weeks since assessment

1

Home sundry items received?

Yes

Home exercise program received?

Yes

Supporting the change

The Health Care Strategy team is supporting COs through this change, and we're meeting with our PT network on a continual basis to provide education, support and feedback on their performance.

Visit wcb.ab.ca/treatment-and-recovery/health-care-services