

**Alberta WCB  
Policies &  
Information**

Chapter:

**INJURIES**

Subject:

**GENERAL**

Authorization

**BoD Resolution 96/10/53**

Date:

**November 26, 1996**

**APPLICATION 7: CHRONIC PAIN/CHRONIC PAIN SYNDROME**

**1. *When does WCB apply the provisions of this application?***

This application applies only to chronic pain and chronic pain syndrome when pain and pain behaviour is inconsistent with organic findings (see Questions 2 and 3). It does not apply to cases of persistent, lingering pain due to discernible organic diagnosis or a psychiatric condition. Such cases are considered for entitlement under WCB's policies relevant to the specific diagnosis or condition.

**2. *When does WCB consider sponsoring treatment for chronic pain?***

WCB may consider treatment for chronic pain when the chronic pain has the following characteristics:

- pain and related symptoms develop as a consequence of a compensable injury or condition,
- the pain persists beyond the usual healing time for the injury,
- complaints of pain and pain behaviour are inconsistent with organic findings, and
- pain impairs earning capacity.

**3. *When does WCB consider chronic pain syndrome a compensable condition?***

Chronic pain syndrome may be compensable when the following conditions are met:

*This policy question is effective January 1, 1992 and applies to all claims regardless of date of accident*

*BoD Resolution 2001/05/28*

- all physical medical investigation and rehabilitation treatment have been concluded,
- pain results in marked life disruption,
- pain and related symptoms develop as a consequence of a compensable injury or condition,
- the pain persists for six months or more beyond the usual healing time for the injury,
- complaints of pain and pain behaviour are inconsistent with organic findings, and
- pain impairs earning capacity.

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**4. *How does WCB determine marked life disruption?***

Marked life disruption is determined by psychological assessment, interviews, and standardized testing; and refers to difficulty or dysfunction in the following areas:

- physical/vegetative functioning
- affective state
- cognitive aspects
- vocational aspects
- family relationships
- social/recreational activities
- behaviour/daily activities

**5. *Are cases of somatoform pain disorder entitled to compensation under this policy?***

Pain disorders are categorized under a number of different labels, e.g., somatoform pain disorder, fibromyalgia, etc. Individuals diagnosed with such disorders may be compensated under this policy, but only if they meet the requirements for chronic pain or chronic pain syndrome.

**6. *How does WCB calculate benefits for chronic pain syndrome?***

When a worker has a loss of earning capacity due to compensable chronic pain syndrome, WCB calculates benefits according to the percentage of the earnings loss which, in WCB’s opinion, is attributable to the compensable disability.

*This policy question is effective January 1, 1992 and applies to all claims regardless of date of accident*

*BoD Resolution 2001/05/28*

**7. *When is this policy application effective?***

This policy application (Application 7 – Chronic Pain/Chronic Pain Syndrome) is effective February 15, 1997, except when noted otherwise in a specific policy section(s).

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**Previous versions**

- [Policy 0301 Part II - August 2015](#)
- [Policy 0301 Part II - January 2004](#)
- [Policy 0301 Part II - June 2002](#)
- [Policy 0301 Part II - June 2001](#)
- [Policy 0301 Part II - December 2000](#)
- [Policy 0301 Part II - September 1999](#)
- [Policy 0301 Part II \(consolidated manual 1st Issue\) - February 1997](#)