

# Permanent clinical impairment (PCI)

## What is permanent clinical impairment?

If you suffered a work-related injury or illness that has had a permanent impact, you may be eligible for benefits recognizing this impact, known as a PCI.

PCI is meant to recognize:

- Loss of a body part,
- Loss of the use of a body part, system or function, or
- A measurable change or disfigurement to any body part, system or function.

The degree of your clinical impairment may be determined by a physician review or in-person medical evaluation after you have reached the point of maximum medical recovery.

## Determining permanent clinical impairment

To determine the level of your PCI, a physician will review the medical reporting on your file. If there is sufficient objective clinical information related to impairment, a PCI calculation may be completed. If there is not sufficient objective clinical information then an in-person evaluation will be arranged.

## The PCI examination

An evaluation is scheduled when enough time has passed to allow you to reach your maximum medical recovery. The time frame varies depending on the type of injury/illness, but it can take up to two years or more to arrive at a recovery level that is considered permanent.

The time period is based on guidelines of standardized healing times. For example, it generally takes two years for a nerve to heal so if your nerves are damaged, we will need to wait two years before assessing your injury.

Your adjudicator or case manager will advise you if an in-person evaluation is required to determine your PCI. However, ask your adjudicator or case manager if you have any questions about an assessment.

## What to expect during a PCI evaluation

A PCI evaluation is different than a regular physical examination as the examining physician is not asked to determine causation or fitness to work. The evaluator will have reviewed your medical file prior to the evaluation, so the evaluation itself may take only a few minutes.

The evaluator will measure your functional abilities, such as range of motion for a limb injury, and ask you questions about your injury. After your evaluation, this information will be provided to a medical consultant, who will use it to rate the level of impairment for your condition.

## How is the PCI exam used to determine the PCI rating?

Once the evaluation is complete, the results are given to one of our medical consultants specially trained in rating PCI. The medical consultant will review the results and apply the approved WCB Alberta rating schedule (Alberta Permanent Clinical Impairment Guidelines) to recommend a percentage of whole body impairment for your injury.

Where the Alberta guidelines do not adequately address your impairment, the medical consultant will then refer to the American Medical Association Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment.

The medical consultant will provide a final percentage number of “whole body impairment.” The percentage is then used to calculate the corresponding financial award, called a non-economic loss payment (NELP).

Built into the PCI ratings are the expected effects of your injury or surgery such as pain at the site of surgery, scarring and expected loss of sensation or strength.

So, even though the rating may appear to be based solely on the range of motion measured in the exam, the other injury effects have automatically been included in the rating provided by the guides used.

The medical consultant may also assess PCI to recognize any unexpected injury effects, not already included in the impairment guide.

## Non-economic loss payment (NELP)

The medical consultant's percentage recommendation is sent to your adjudicator or case manager to translate the percentage into a NELP payment.

A NELP is awarded to you if medical evidence tells us you have a permanent clinical impairment relating to an injury/illness that occurred on or after Jan. 1, 1995.

A NELP is a one-time payment. This payment acknowledges that your injury has had an effect on your life outside of work; however, the payment does not compensate for:

- the loss of ability to work or loss of earnings.
- pain and suffering.

The PCI can be reassessed if your condition worsens in the future.

Information about benefits that recognize loss of earnings can be found [here](#).

