



This factsheet has been prepared for general information purposes. It is not a legal document. Please refer to the *Workers Compensation Act* and the *Rehabilitation Services and Claims Manual, Volumes I and II* for purposes of interpretation and application of the law.

Factsheet #18
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COMPENSABLE CONSEQUENCES OF WORK INJURIES

Once a work injury is accepted by WorkSafeBC, questions sometimes arise about what consequences of the injury are also acceptable. If the injury was a significant cause of a further injury, or of increased disablement, disease, or death, then the further injury, increased disablement, disease, or death will also be considered compensable. WorkSafeBC accepts responsibility for additional conditions developing as a result of a previously accepted work injury or for additional injuries resulting from the accepted injury.

What does “significant cause” mean?

The original compensable injury or condition does not need to be the only cause of a subsequent injury, increased disablement, disease, or death. Nor does the original injury need to be the most important factor in causing a subsequent injury or condition. It is often the case that there were a number of factors leading to the further injury or condition, but WorkSafeBC is still responsible to provide benefits so long as the original injury or condition can be considered to be a significant factor in causing or producing the subsequent injury, disablement, disease or death. To qualify as a significant factor, the original injury or condition must only be something more than trivial. In other words, it cannot be an insignificant factor.

What about further disability caused by medical treatment?

If a worker receives medical treatment for a WorkSafeBC-accepted injury, and that treatment is a significant factor in a further injury, WorkSafeBC may accept the further injury in the original claim. For example, if a worker is injured while attending a rehabilitation program sponsored by WorkSafeBC, WorkSafeBC will accept responsibility for any resulting disability.

WorkSafeBC will also accept responsibility for an increased disability caused by surgery for an accepted work injury. If the worker's doctor recommends the surgery, WorkSafeBC will accept the consequences even if WorkSafeBC did not authorize the surgery.

WorkSafeBC will also accept responsibility for any other increased disability that is activated or aggravated by an accepted work injury.

For more information:
Website: www.labour.gov.bc.ca/wab



Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley/Kootenays: 1-800-663-4261
Northern & Central Interior: 1-800-663-6695
Vancouver Island: 1-800-661-4066

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What consequences does WorkSafeBC not cover?

WorkSafeBC does not pay for injuries caused by ordinary exercises at home after the worker's condition has stabilized. WorkSafeBC may suspend benefits if treatment for a non-work related injury delays recovery from a work injury (however, WorkSafeBC is obligated to inform the worker before suspending benefits).

What about injuries while travelling for treatment?

WorkSafeBC excludes injuries occurring during "normal" travel for medical treatment to a doctor, specialist or outpatient clinic.

Travel for exceptional purposes, including emergency treatment, travel to or from a hospital for admission and other special journeys for treatment (including attendance for a WorkSafeBC medical exam) is covered. Likewise, injuries during pre-arranged travel to a WorkSafeBC office, or for the purposes of an appeal are covered.

What about a non-disabling work injury that later becomes worse outside work?

WorkSafeBC accepts responsibility for a disability caused by work, even if the worker suffered from a previous non-work related condition which increased the possibility of injury. Generally however, WorkSafeBC will not accept responsibility for a disability caused by a non-work incident, even if a previous work incident had caused the worker to be more vulnerable to injury. The exception to this rule is that WorkSafeBC will accept a fall or other aggravation outside work where the work injury actually caused the fall.

What about a psychological disability?

Similar principles apply to psychological disabilities, even if the worker had a pre-existing non-disabling psychological condition. WorkSafeBC will accept a psychological disability where the work injury substantially contributed to cause the disability. However, WorkSafeBC is reluctant to accept a psychological disability indirectly related to a work injury. For example, WorkSafeBC may deny a claim for depression or even suicide caused by financial difficulties or marital problems following a work injury, if the depression would have occurred even without the work accident. In these cases, strong medical evidence is needed to support the link between the accident and the psychological disability for an appeal.

What if I disagree with a decision?

If you do not agree with WorkSafeBC decision, you have the right to request a review. You must request a review within **90 days**. If you disagree with the Review Division decision you have **30 days** to file an appeal to the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal.