

## The Special Support Service for Former Sawmill Workers Exposed to PCP – General information for doctors

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The Special Support Service for Former Sawmill Workers Exposed to PCP (the Sawmill Workers Service) is for former sawmill workers who were exposed to pentachlorophenol (PCP) and other hazardous substances at sawmills throughout New Zealand from the 1950s to the 1980s. The Sawmill Workers Service aims to help people stay healthy by supporting the early detection of diseases, promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing modifiable risk factors.

### What is the Special Support Service for Former Sawmill Workers Exposed to PCP?

The Sawmill Workers Service is based on a free annual health check delivered by a primary health care team in a general practice setting. It includes referrals to other publicly funded services depending on patients' health needs – like referral to smoking cessation programmes, physical activity programmes, nutrition advice, mental health services, and genetic counselling.

### Do I have to determine my patient's eligibility for the Service?

No. Eligibility is based on whether the patient worked in a sawmill that used PCP, how long they worked at a sawmill and whether they are entitled to publicly funded health services in New Zealand. An individual's eligibility will be determined following an application to the Ministry of Health. An appeals process is available for unsuccessful applicants.

### How will I know if one of my patients is eligible for the Service?

Applicants must provide the name of their general practitioner, family doctor, or medical centre with their application. The nominated practitioner of successful applicants will then be informed in writing by the Support Service National Secretariat

that the patient is eligible for the Sawmill Workers Service. Following this, the nominated practitioner will be given information about the Sawmill Workers Service and specific tools (guidance material, patient questionnaire) for use in undertaking the health check.

### Specific questions about the annual health check

#### What is the free annual health check?

Eligible individuals are entitled to a free annual health check. The content of each check depends on the patient's medical history, current health needs, and the clinical decisions made by the primary health care team. The free health check generally involves:

- talking about PCP and dioxin exposure, its health effects and the patient's exposure
- talking about the patient's health and providing brief advice on staying healthy
- considering whether the patient has any symptoms associated with PCP or dioxin exposure and completing a physical examination if necessary
- discussing any mental health concerns the patient may have
- considering whether to refer the patient to Green Prescription programmes, nutrition services, smoking cessation, mental health or genetic counselling.

#### Will the first health check be the same as subsequent annual checks?

The content of each health check depends on the health needs of the individual, good clinical practice, and the clinical judgement of the primary health care team. Some patients will receive similar checks each year while others will get different checks.

## Who should deliver the annual health check?

The annual health check is delivered by a primary care team in a general practice setting. The primary care team will need to decide who should be involved and how.

## What is the service fee for the annual health check?

The fee for the first health check is \$220 (GST excl) per health check per person. The fee for the second and all subsequent annual health check is \$75 (GST excl) per health check per person. No other fee or co-payment can be charged to the patient.

## Are laboratory or pharmaceutical costs included in the service fee?

Any diagnostic tests or treatment/management services referred from the health check are publicly funded as normal.

## How do I claim the service fee for the annual health check?

Doctors and medical centres can invoice the Sawmill Workers Service directly for all annual health check payments. Please send invoices to the Ministry of Health's address and include all the information requested below on each invoice.

## What information do I need to provide to the Ministry of Health?

The Ministry of Health requires that you provide the following information when seeking payment for the health check: full name of the patient, patient NHI, patient's date of birth, date and duration of the health check, practice PHO, health support service components that the patient was referred to, name of the general practice, and the name and registration details of the health practitioner delivering the health check.

This information is collected by the Sawmill Workers Service and must be provided before payment can be made.

## Specific questions about the referred services

### What services can I refer a patient to?

You can refer your patient to the following services as they exist in your area:

- the Green Prescription programme or other physical activity programmes
- dietician and nutrition services
- smoking cessation and support services to modify risky drinking behaviours
- primary mental health services or genetic counselling.

### How do I refer a patient to these services?

As patients will be accessing existing local services, you will need to consider the referral guidelines and processes of each specific programme.

### Will there be cost to the patient for referral?

Patients pay the usual cost to access referred services. In many cases, these services are free or offered at low or very low cost. Genetic counselling services are free.

### Getting more information

You can get more information about PCP exposure, its health effects, and the Sawmill Workers Service from the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health has developed a range of information for eligible patients and other interested individuals. This information is included on the Ministry of Health's website. General information about the Sawmill Workers Service and about PCP exposure and health effects has also been provided to eligible individuals as part of their eligibility pack. Ministry of Health contact details are:

Special Support Service for Former Sawmill Workers

Ministry of Health, PO Box 5013, Wellington 6145

Email: [emailmoh@moh.govt.nz](mailto:emailmoh@moh.govt.nz)

Telephone: 0800 288 588

Website: [www.moh.govt.nz/dioxins](http://www.moh.govt.nz/dioxins)

Specific technical questions can be directed to 0800 288 588, and will be forwarded to the appropriate expert for response. We expect to return a response to you within five working days.