

What is a mental injury?

Employer resource



Watch the video

What is a mental injury?

A mental injury is an illness or condition that affects a person's mood, feelings, thoughts, or behaviours. Sometimes, these are called psychological or psychiatric injuries.

Mental injuries and illnesses can include conditions like depression, anxiety, adjustment disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

When is it work-related?

A mental injury is work-related when a person's job is a significant contributing factor to the injury. This might be due to job demands, an incident at work, or the workplace environment.

How do mental injuries occur?

Mental injuries can be caused by being exposed to:

- A traumatic event in the line of work, such as violence or a severe accident, which can lead to conditions like PTSD.
- Mental health risks at work, also known as psychosocial hazards, over time.

Psychosocial hazards

Looking after your workers' mental health is just as important as preventing physical injuries at work.

Psychosocial hazards are anything in the design of work that increases the risk of psychological or physical harm. They can include things like:

- Stress
- Fatigue
- Poor support
- High or low job demands
- Low job control
- Bullying
- Harassment (including sexual harassment)
- Violence and aggression
- Traumatic events
- Remote or isolated work
- Low reward and recognition
- Poor organisational change management
- Low role clarity

Visit our website to learn more about identifying and managing psychosocial hazards in the workplace.

Exclusion for reasonable management action

Under Queensland law, workplace mental injuries caused by reasonable management action, if taken in a reasonable way, are excluded from workers' compensation. This might include things like performance management or a transfer. If you're not sure, see our website.



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Primary vs. secondary mental injuries

A work-related mental injury can be the main injury or illness in a WorkCover claim. You might hear us call this a primary mental injury.

However, mental injuries can also happen after or in connection to a physical injury at work. This is sometimes called a secondary mental injury.

A secondary mental injury can happen because:

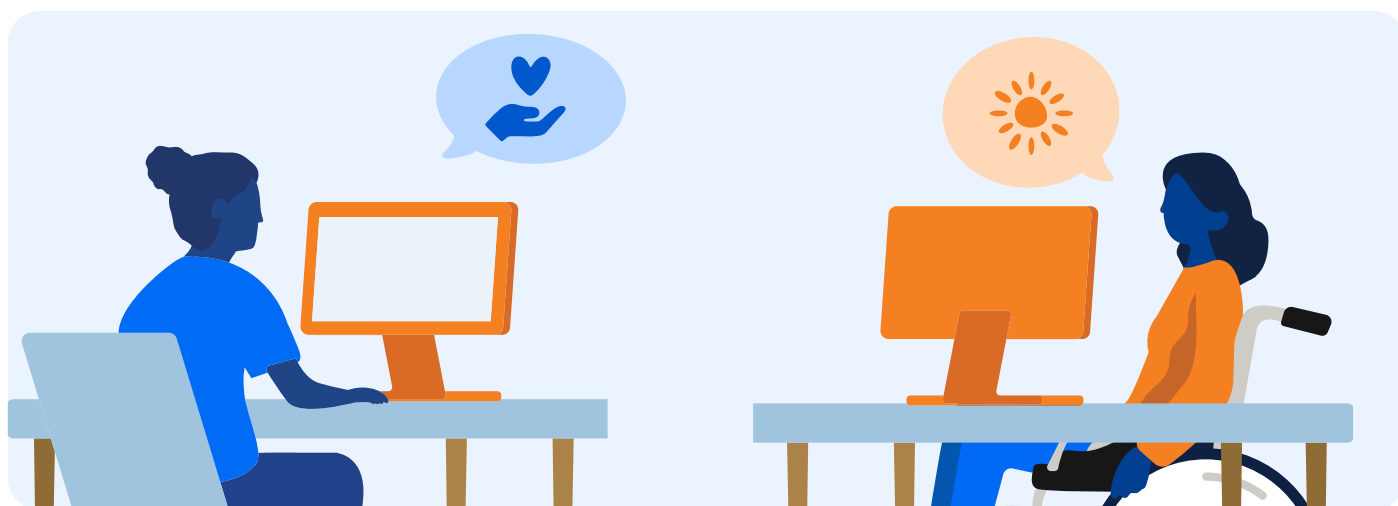
- the person is struggling to cope or adapt to life with a physical injury, or they're worried about the future.
- the physical injury was caused by a traumatic event, like an assault.
- they feel anxious or uncertain about going back to work, what the future holds, or what people at work might think.

What employers can do to help

As an employer, you play a key role when your worker is injured. Your response to their injury or illness, whether physical or mental, is critical to their recovery.

There are lots of positive things you can do:

- show genuine care and concern.
- check in with your worker when they're injured, while they're off and as they get back to work.
- offer tasks a worker can do safely while they recover, known as suitable duties.
- create a workplace free from mental health stigma, where people feel comfortable to talk about their mental health.



WorkCover is here to help

If you have any questions, you can find your claim contact on WorkCover Connect and reach them directly. Or you can call one of our team on **1300 362 128**.

worksafe.qld.gov.au

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