

Undertaking Health Checks in the Sawmill Workers' Service

Health checks and recommended examinations and investigations should be appropriate to each patient's situation and health status given their concerns, symptoms and medical/family history.

This is a suggested format for the annual health check of the Sawmills Workers' Service. This is a health support service available to former sawmill workers exposed to pentachlorophenol (PCP) between 1950 –1989. As well as other toxic chemicals, PCP contains dioxin impurities. The exposure to dioxin through PCP is what the health check is designed to monitor.

For information about who can provide the health check, referrals to other services, information about the service fee, or payment queries please review the ***Factsheet for Health Providers – About the Sawmill Workers' Service***.

More information about the Sawmill Workers' Service is available on Health New Zealand's website: www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/dioxins

Please do not send Health New Zealand or Health Support Services any of your patient's medical history. This should be kept between the patient and the health provider.

Health Check Assessment

Initial health check

If your patient is new, provide patient with information about PCP and their health effect, including duration and type of exposure.

Discuss any concerns about exposure and/or provide the patient with further information.

Initial and subsequent health checks

Each health check should:

- Be individualised to the needs and lifestyle of each patient
- Consider any recent health concerns
- Consider if there are any symptoms relevant to **Box A**, below.

Box A: The following conditions have sufficient evidence of association with exposure to dioxin:

- Hodgkin's disease
- non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- soft tissue sarcoma
- chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL)
- chloracne
- hypertension
- monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance

Please consider whether the patient has any symptoms or health conditions noted above when conducting the health check.

Current potential health issues from previous dioxin exposure include:

- Malaise, fatigue, weight loss, night sweats, persistent fever, etc.
- Skin/soft tissue (e.g. itchiness, rashes, lumps etc.)
- Respiratory issues
- Atypical pain
- Prostatic symptoms
- Whether the patient had or has any mental health concerns (anxiety, stress, depression, or other mild-moderate mental health issues) regarding their workplace exposure (*make referral if needed for counselling or psychiatric care*)¹

If relevant, other factors to consider include:

- Reviewing any medical history, family history and current diseases or medication.
- Pregnancy (or future child-bearing plans) and folate supplementation.

Consider completing the following examinations (where indicated):

- The patient's general health and lifestyle (weight/height/BMI, smoking, alcohol and/or other drug use, blood pressure, urinalysis, blood glucose) (make referral if needed)¹
- Respiratory examination and lung function (including spirometry and peak expiratory flow rate)
- Skin, soft tissue, lymphatic system
- Brief neurological examination including motor, sensory function, and back and lower limb function
- Abdominal examination
- Prostate specific antigen (PSA) (following an informed discussion about the advantages and limitations of PSA screening for asymptomatic men)
- Breast or gynaecological examination if indicated
- Mental health assessment.

¹ Other specialist referral (normal referral criteria apply). Genetic advice or counselling (normal referral criteria apply).

Review for the following screening opportunities (where indicated and update where necessary):

- Cardiovascular risk status including cholesterol and blood pressure
- Diabetes annual review ('Get Checked') (*if relevant*)
- HPV test (*if relevant*)
- Mammogram (*if relevant*)
- Bowel screening
- Alcohol consumption
- Review vaccinations (where indicated and update where necessary).

Refer to Health Pathways for relevant investigations indicated by standard evidence-based guidelines where necessary.

Management

Undertake appropriate management of or referral for any conditions detected. For instance, order relevant tests based on examination.

Action referral to any of the following lifestyle modifications if indicated:

- Smoking cessation
- Exercise/physical activity (e.g. green prescriptions)
- Dietary advice (e.g. practice, dietician)
- Alcohol/drug issues (e.g. brief GP intervention or referral).

Please note that copayment may be required for the tests as per the local laboratory service requirements.

Please do not send Health New Zealand or the Health Support Services any medical records.

These should be kept between the health provider and the patient.

Additional information

- Further information on the Sawmill Workers' Service is available here: www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/dioxins
- Prostate cancer: <https://teaho.govt.nz/index.php/cancer-information/types-cancer/prostate-cancer>
- Diabetes: <https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/for-health-professionals/clinical-guidance/diseases-and-conditions/long-term-conditions/diabetes>
- Mental health and addiction: <https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/health-services-and-programmes/mental-health-and-addiction>
- Quitting smoking: <https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/for-health-professionals/clinical-guidance/specific-life-stage-health-information/child->

[health/well-child-tamariki-programme/te-mahau-tarearea-o-tamariki-ora/smoking-cessation](#)

- Alcohol: <https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/health-services-and-programmes/health-promotion/programmes/alcohol>
- Drugs: <https://drugfoundation.org.nz/>