

# Special Support Service for Former Sawmill Workers Exposed to PCP: Annual health check guidance for doctors

This is a suggested format for the annual health check components of the Special Support Service for Former Sawmill Workers Exposed to PCP (the Sawmill Workers Service). The annual health check is a new comprehensive service designed to assess the health needs of former sawmill workers exposed to pentachlorophenol (PCP) and other hazardous substances during the 1950s to the 1980s, and to facilitate access to services to support wellness. History, examination, and investigations should be appropriate to each individual's situation and health status.

This form should be used in conjunction with the Annual Health Check for Former Sawmill Workers performa.

More information is available on the Ministry of Health's website: [www.moh.govt.nz/dioxins](http://www.moh.govt.nz/dioxins)

## History

- A. Review patient questionnaire.
- B. Discuss the patient's exposure to PCP and dioxin.
- C. Consider whether the patient has any symptoms or health conditions related to PCP and dioxin exposure (eg, review 'Current Health' section of patient questionnaire).

Specific issues to consider include:

- malaise, fatigue, weight loss, night sweats, persistent fever, etc
- skin/soft tissue (eg, itchiness, rashes, lumps, etc)
- respiratory issues
- peripheral neuropathy or other neurological symptoms
- atypical pain
- prostatic symptoms
- anxiety, depression, or other mild-moderate mental health issues
- pregnancy (or future child-bearing plans) and folate supplementation.

Review medical history, family history, and current diseases or medication.

- D. Consider whether the patient has any mental health concerns (eg, review 'mood screening' section of patient questionnaire).
- E. Consider the patient's general health and lifestyle including smoking, weight/exercise, alcohol or other drug use (eg, review appropriate sections of the patient questionnaire). Explore 'stage of change'/motivation for change.

## Information

- F. Provide patient with information about PCP and dioxin and their health effects and discuss any concerns about exposure or refer the patient for further information.

## Examination

- G. Consider completing the following examinations (where indicated):
  - general (weight/height/BMI, blood pressure, urinalysis, blood glucose)
  - respiratory examination and lung function (including spirometry)
  - skin, soft tissue, lymphatic system
  - brief neurological examination including motor, sensory function, and back and lower limb function
  - abdominal examination
  - prostate, breast, or gynaecological examination if indicated.

## Review screening status

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

- cardiovascular risk status
- diabetes annual review ('Get Checked') (if relevant)
- ultrasound to detect neural tube defects (if relevant)
- cervical smear
- mammogram.

## Management

I. Undertake appropriate management of or referral for any conditions detected.

## Investigations

J. Undertake the following investigations if indicated by standard evidence-based guidelines:

- lipids and blood glucose
- serum proteins and immunoglobulin (if indication of multiple myeloma)
- diabetes level of control (eg, HbA1C, etc)
- full blood count
- chest X-ray (if respiratory symptoms or indications of lymphoma, Hodgkins, lung disease, etc)
- PSA (following an informed discussion about the advantages and limitations of PSA screening for asymptomatic men)
- other specific tests if clinical indications

## Referral options

K. Action referral to any of the following if indicated:

### Lifestyle modification

- smoking cessation
- exercise/physical activity (eg, green prescriptions)
- dietary advice (eg, practice nurse, dietician)
- alcohol/drug issues (eg, brief GP intervention or referral).

## Mental health

- counselling for mild to moderate mental health concerns (eg, normal referral criteria apply)
- mental health referral for major psychiatric illness.

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

## Documentation

L. Complete Ministry information/claim form.

M. Provide examination/investigation report to patient (and usual GP) if requested.

## More information

If your patient would like more information, they can discuss this with you, or they can contact the Ministry of Health:

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)

Additional information can also be found in the following guidelines.

- *Prostate Cancer Screening in New Zealand*. New Zealand Guidelines Group (April 2004).
- *Management of Type 2 Diabetes*. New Zealand Guidelines Group (December 2003).
- *Depression: Information for Health Practitioners*. New Zealand Guidelines Group (October 2006).
- *Guidelines for Recognising, Assessing and Treating Alcohol and Cannabis Abuse in Primary Care*. National Health Committee (July 1999).
- *New Zealand Smoking Cessation Guidelines*. Ministry of Health (August 2007).