

# Opioids and time off work in workers with low back pain

**Opioids** should be used for **low back pain** at a **low dose** and for a **short duration**.

There is **limited evidence** that opioids provide clinically important benefits to pain or disability. There are also well-known **adverse effects**.

IN OUR RECENT STUDY WE SOUGHT TO...

- 1** identify and characterise opioid dispensing intensity and duration patterns
- 2** determine the association between opioid dispensing patterns and time off work in Australian workers with accepted claims for low back pain.

WE INCLUDED A TOTAL OF

**9,619 WORKERS**



**1/3** were dispensed opioids at least *once* in the **2.5 years** since low back pain onset

We included claims for low back pain with one or more days off work from Victoria and South Australia.



Workers who **were dispensed opioids** had **more** time off work than those **who did not** receive opioids.

## OPIOID USE AND TIME OFF WORK

**NO opioids** → **7.1 WEEKS**

Short-term low-volume → 30.7 WEEKS

**Long-term moderate-volume** → **126.9 WEEKS**

Long-term high-volume → 126.0 WEEKS



These findings show that a **small proportion** of workers receive **opioids long-term**, and that receipt of opioids may have a relationship with compensated **time off work**.

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