

Independent Medical Examinations (IMEs) – Patient Information

An Independent Medical Examination (IME) is a medical assessment conducted for a specific purpose, usually at the request of an insurer, employer, or legal body. This leaflet explains what an IME is, why it may be requested, and what patients can expect.

What Is an Independent Medical Examination?

An IME is:

- A **one-off or time-limited medical assessment**
- Conducted by a medical practitioner **not involved in your treatment**
- Requested for **assessment and reporting**, not for care or treatment

An IME is different from seeing your treating psychiatrist.

Why an IME May Be Requested

IMEs are commonly requested in contexts such as:

- WorkCover or compensation claims
- Income protection or insurance matters
- Legal or court-related processes
- Workplace or occupational assessments

The purpose is usually to obtain an **independent medical opinion**.

How an IME Differs From Treating Care

An IME doctor:

- Does **not** provide treatment
- Does **not** prescribe medication
- Does **not** form a therapeutic relationship
- Does **not** provide ongoing follow-up

Their role is limited to assessment and reporting.

What Happens During an IME

While the process varies, an IME may involve:

- Review of background information and records
- A clinical interview
- Questions about symptoms, history, and functioning
- Discussion of work, daily activities, and capacity

The assessment is focused on answering specific referral questions.

Preparing for an IME

Helpful preparation may include:

- Bringing relevant information if requested
- Answering questions honestly and clearly
- Taking time to understand the purpose of the assessment

There is no requirement to minimise or exaggerate symptoms.

What the IME Report Includes

An IME report may include:

- Summary of information reviewed
- Findings from the assessment
- Diagnostic opinions where relevant
- Opinions on functioning, capacity, or impairment

The report is prepared for the **requesting party**, not for treatment planning.

Limits of IME Opinions

IME opinions:

- Are based on information available at the time
- Reflect a snapshot rather than ongoing observation
- May differ from opinions of treating clinicians

Differences in opinion do not mean one assessment is “right” or “wrong”.

IMEs and Confidentiality

IME reports:

- Are shared with the requesting organisation
- Are subject to legal and administrative processes
- May be distributed beyond your control once released

You can ask who will receive the report before the assessment.

IMEs and Your Treating Psychiatrist

Your treating psychiatrist:

- Focuses on care and recovery
- Does not control the IME process or outcome
- May not agree with all IME conclusions

Treating clinicians and IME assessors have **different roles**.

Common Concerns About IMEs

It is common to feel:

- Anxious or uncomfortable
- Worried about being judged
- Concerned about the impact on claims or work

These feelings are understandable. IMEs are evaluative, not therapeutic.

If You Have Concerns About an IME

If you are unsure about:

- The purpose of the IME
- What will be asked
- How the report will be used

You may wish to seek clarification from:

- The requesting organisation
 - Your legal representative
 - Your treating clinician (for general guidance)
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Summary

An Independent Medical Examination is an assessment conducted for reporting purposes, separate from treatment.

Understanding its role and limits can help reduce uncertainty and support informed participation.
