

THE PRE-EMPLOYMENT MEDICAL

The following information has been provided by Dr Chris Kelly of JobFit, a pre-employment medical provider to major industry employers.

A pre-employment medical examination is an integral component of the recruitment process in the resource sector. So....what is involved?

Why do companies do Pre-employment Medicals?

Good employers these days take their responsibility for duty of care very seriously. This requires understanding what risks their prospective employees might have and managing these risks in the workplace with the aim of avoiding illness or injury to the applicant or to other existing employees.

There are also statutory (in other words, legal) requirements such as making sure drivers meet the National Standards for Commercial and Heavy Vehicle Driving. There are numerous medical standards that must be met – Shotfirer's Medical, Mine Health Surveillance Medical, Rail Safety Critical Workers Medical and Coal Mine Workers Medical to name just a few.

Aren't they just trying to weed out anyone with a past work injury?

It is not uncommon for a candidate to be concerned that he or she "won't get through" the medical because of previous injury.

Employers cannot and do not exclude people because of this. Lots of people have sprains and strains at work in a physical role. What a medical practitioner aims to establish is that there was an appropriate rehabilitation from the injury without excessive unexplained treatment or time off work.

What happens at a pre-employment medical?

The assessment will usually involve a number of aspects. Exactly what is done depends on the job and the company you are applying for.

As a minimum, you will need to fill out a questionnaire and undergo an examination. Some other points you need to be aware of:

- The questionnaire will cover your health history, your work history and your lifestyle habits.
- The examination will be comprehensive – from your blood pressure to your vision, heart, tummy, limbs and spine. You will even have your urine checked for sugar and blood. It will require you to strip to your underclothes, so be prepared.
- It will usually include a hearing test (so don't listen to loud music, eg your iPod or your car stereo on the way to the medical as this will have an immediate effect on your hearing).

- You may need to do a urine drug screen for illicit drugs such as cannabis, amphetamines etc. Most companies will automatically refuse to employ anyone caught trying to rot the test. Cannabis can stay in your system for days after occasional use.
- You may need to do a lung function test so, if you are a smoker, don't smoke on the way to the medical or while you are waiting.
- Increasingly companies are asking for physical fitness assessments for jobs that are in remote and hot environments and are physically demanding. This can be done in a number of ways (bike, step test, treadmill) but requires you to have appropriate clothing, eg shorts, t-shirt or crop top with support bra for women, sandals etc.
- Finally you may need to have a functional capacity assessment – this is an assessment of your lifting and carrying capacity. Again, appropriate clothes are needed.
- Some mining jobs also require a chest x-ray by law.

Some advice:

- Be honest with your answers; it is dangerous for you to place yourself in a position which may do you harm, and which your new employer, may then not be aware of.
- Don't be afraid it is "a trap" designed to stop you getting the job – it is not.
- Don't use illicit drugs.
- If you are on medication, declare it! It will get picked up one way or another anyway.
- Don't be 'aggro' – it is part of a modern job application these days.
- If you are really unfit or overweight, start doing something about it now – this will be seen as a positive.

Pre-Employment Medical Checklist

- Take your driver's license or other photo identification to the medical, you WILL need it.
- You will be asked to undress to your underwear to allow a thorough examination and to provide a urine specimen.
- Therefore take or wear appropriate clothing, eg shorts and t-shirt and a support bra/crop top for women. The doctor or nurse will be examining all joints, the neck, spine, chest and abdomen. Wear appropriate underclothes.
- So that the results of your audiogram (hearing test) will not be affected, avoid exposure to loud noise in the 16 hours prior to the medical – this includes loud music.
- If you wear/need spectacles, take them with you.
- A spirometry (lung function) test may be required and you may be asked to use a Ventolin puffer as part of the assessment. If you are a smoker, don't smoke before the medical.
- Personal examinations are NOT part of a pre-employment medical, eg breast examination, prostate examination etc.
- Leave enough time – the time required will range from one hour (minimum) to two hours for a more extensive assessment.