



22 August 2025



Kia ora 

Your Official Information Act request, reference: GOV-042196

Thank you for your email of 8 August 2025, asking for the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

Could you provide with the number of sneeze-related claims ACC has received in the last five years (July 31, 2021 to July 31, 2025) for injuries sustained by sneezing, please? Could you also tell me what injuries were suffered in these sneeze-related incidents, please? I.e. Pulled back muscles, ligament damage, snapped tendons, broken bones etc. And also the causes of sneeze-related injuries? I.e. Trips, falls, car and bike crashes etc.

The requested information is attached in the appendix

Please refer to the 'Notes and Caveats' section when interpreting the information provided.

Claim counts fewer than four

Some values in the tables only indicate that the claim count is fewer than four (denoted as <4). We are withholding specific values for those claims to limit the potential of individuals, or matters specific to individuals, from inadvertently being identified. This decision has been made under section 9(2)(a) of the Act.

We consider that the public interest in this information does not outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public

ACC may publish a copy of this response on ACC's website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release. The released response will be made available www.acc.co.nz/resources/#/category/12. Please also view this page about making requests and our published responses <https://www.acc.co.nz/contact/official-information-act-requests>.

If you have any questions about this response, please get in touch

You can contact our Media team at media@acc.co.nz.

If you are not happy with this response, you can also contact the Ombudsman via info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Johnston', written in a cursive style.

Christopher Johnston

Manager Official Information Act Services

Government Engagement



Notes and Caveats:

- Data is displayed in calendar years.
- Accredited employer claims have been excluded.
- Claims are included where the cover decision is equal to 'Accept'.
- Sneezing claims have been identified where the following words have been found in the accident description, with some spelling variations:
- sneeze - sneezing - sneez
- The accident description is a non-mandatory free-text field on the ACC45 form. The nature and quality of responses varies. These data should therefore be considered indicative, but not a definitive count of claims.
- New claims are counted where a claim is lodged with ACC between the specified period. A claim may be lodged immediately following an accident or at any later stage.
- Active claims are counted where the claim received at least one payment between the specified period. A claim was not necessarily lodged or had the accident occur within this time period.
- A claim may be active in more than one calendar year and will be counted, under active claims, once in each relevant year in which at least one payment was made.
- Active Costs are the GST exclusive cost of payments made for claims that were active in the specified period.
- Please note that Public Health Acute Services (PHAS) payments are not included. These costs are for treatment of ACC claims in a public hospital in the acute phase for a covered injury.
- The calendar year in which the service was paid may differ to the calendar year in which the service was provided.
- Data were extracted on 19 August 2025 and may differ if re-run at a later date.

Table 1: Number of new claims, active claims and active claim costs (excluding GST) for sneeze related claims between 1 January 2020 and 18 August 2025

Measure	Calendar Year					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 YTD
New claims	400	396	385	423	452	267
Active claims	449	463	442	486	522	360
Active costs	\$437,331	\$320,987	\$659,877	\$749,748	\$883,389	\$589,687

Table 2: Number of new sneeze related claims lodged between 1 January 2020 and 18 August 2025, broken down by lodgement month

Lodgement month	Lodgement Calendar Year					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 YTD
January	30	26	21	28	36	44
February	31	40	23	31	32	33
March	28	22	33	37	30	22
April	12	30	31	26	37	23
May	34	30	37	32	48	42
June	33	39	36	39	37	37
July	43	41	41	31	37	50
August	44	32	33	46	45	16
September	31	36	34	42	42	
October	39	27	25	29	35	
November	33	39	38	42	30	
December	42	34	33	40	43	

Table 3: Number of new sneeze related claims lodged between 1 January 2020 and 18 August 2025, broken down by injury cause

Injury cause	Lodgement Calendar Year					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 YTD
Road	13	13	12	8	21	8
Fall	92	87	94	109	100	62
Sport	15	15	16	20	33	22
Other	280	281	263	286	298	175

- Road related claims are identified where the fund is in the Motor Vehicle account.
- Fall related claims are identified where the accident cause equals 'Misjudgement of Support' or 'Loss of Consciousness/Sleep' or 'Loss of Balance/Personal Contrl' or 'Slipping, Skidding on Foot' or 'Something Giving way Underfoot' or 'Tripping or Stumbling'.
- Sport related claims are identified where the sport field is not equal to 'Please Select' or 'Not Obtainable' or 'Not Applicable'.
- Please note that these groups are mutually exclusive and prioritised in the order listed above.
- An injury was not necessarily directly caused by the cause above, but claims are related to these categories and to sneezes.

Table 4: Number of new sneeze related claims lodged between 1 January 2020 and 18 August 2025, broken down by the top 5 most prevalent primary injury diagnoses

Primary injury diagnosis	Lodgement Calendar Year					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 YTD
Soft Tissue Injury	322	329	322	337	381	221
Fracture / Dislocation	21	21	19	23	21	10
Laceration / Puncture / Sting	14	6	11	12	12	7
Dental Injury	10	7	10	11	15	8
Foreign Body In Orifice / Eye	7	9	4	6	6	9

- Diagnosis is the primary injury of the client. A claim may include multiple injuries but any additional injuries will not be included in this dataset.

Table 5: Number of new sneeze related claims lodged between 1 January 2020 and 18 August 2025, broken down by the top 10 most prevalent primary injury sites

Primary injury site	Lodgement Calendar Year					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 YTD
Lower Back / Spine	171	162	154	160	174	108
Chest	63	65	62	69	85	42
Neck / Back Of Head Vertebrae	42	42	44	57	54	28
Upper Back / Spine	34	41	41	30	41	26
Face	13	11	21	17	20	13
Shoulder (incl Clavicle / Blade)	19	13	11	20	23	6
Nose	6	8	4	9	8	9
Hip / Upper Leg / Thigh	6	7	4	11	8	4
Abdomen / Pelvis	5	10	4	8	6	<4
Other Internal Organ	7	5	4	4	4	<4

- Injury site is the primary injury of the client. A claim may include multiple injuries but any additional injuries will not be included in this dataset.