



Returning to work

Current from 1 July 2019



Working together

Your role

The most important person in your return to work is you.

A large part of recovering from your accident and getting on with your life is returning to work. Returning to work means getting back to your normal routine and managing your injury, rather than letting it dominate your life. To assist your own return to work you can:

1. Stay in contact with your employer and your health professional and regularly discuss your return to work with them.

2. Find out if there is an Occupational Health and Safety officer or Human Resources officer at your work who can help you with your return to work.

3. Keep your employer up to date with your progress by sending them copies of your certificates of capacity.

Remember that if you return to work, even if it's part-time, you must tell the TAC so that your income support can be calculated and paid correctly. If you have any questions about returning to work, please call us on 1300 654 329.





1300 654 329



www.tac.vic.gov.au



myTAC

The role of the TAC

We will work with you, your employer and your health professional to help you return to work. First we will:

- Contact you to find out how you are managing with your injury
- Talk about whether you've considered returning to work
- Explain what options and supports are available to make your return as smooth as possible.

The TAC will work with your treating doctor to explore what tasks you are able to perform. We will also talk with your employer to see what alternative duties you can do while you are recovering from your injuries.

In many cases, we can help you with income support during the return to work process. For more information please refer to the brochure *TAC Loss of earnings benefits*.

The role of your employer

Your employer plays an important part in your return to work. They may be able to help with a timely return to work by:

- Finding suitable work for you while you recover from your injuries
- Taking you back on reduced hours.

It is important that you keep your employer up to date with your recovery and discuss these options with them.

The TAC has an incentive package that may be offered to employers to assist in this process.

If your employer can't find suitable duties for you, or isn't able to offer you reduced hours, the TAC will continue to assist you in your recovery, and in most cases can provide income support while you return to work.

The role of your health professional

Your health professional is the best person to evaluate how long you need off work and when you can return. For example, this could be your GP, physio, surgeon or chiropractor. They can:

- Tell you what you can and can't do while you are recovering
- Discuss with you the most suitable options for your return to work
- Provide advice on whether there are any restrictions or equipment needs for your return to work
- Advise you on how to best manage your return to work, such as when to take breaks and when to do exercises.

Your health professional should use a certificate of capacity to make these recommendations, and to provide the most suitable options for your return to work.

You and your health professional should talk to your employer about these options so that suitable duties can be found for you while you are recovering.

You can talk about your job with your health professional so that they have a better understanding of what tasks you can do while you recover.

TAC support

A range of services and benefits are available to help you return to work as soon as possible.

TAC services and benefits include:

- Income support
- Travel to work benefit
- Return to work program, which could include:
 - vocational assistance
 - workplace assessment
 - workplace modifications or equipment

Contact the TAC on 1300 654 329 to discuss your options.





1300 654 329



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Income support

You may already be receiving income support from the TAC. We can continue to offer this benefit until you are fit to fully return to work. If you return to work full-time you must let us know so that your income support can be calculated correctly.

If you return to work on reduced hours you should contact the TAC as you may still be entitled to receive partial loss of earnings benefits. Generally, if you go back to work and your employer pays you less than the TAC paid you before you returned to work, we can top-up your pay. If you are eligible for partial income support your TAC claims manager will explain what you need to do in order to make a claim.

More detailed information on loss of earnings benefits can be found in the brochure *TAC Loss of earnings benefits*. This brochure is available on our website or by calling 1300 654 329.

Travel to work benefit

If you are unable to travel to work in your normal way because of your accident injuries, contact the TAC about the 'Travel to work' benefit.

The TAC will work with you and your health professional to assess your eligibility for this benefit. For example, if you drove to work before your accident, but aren't able to drive at the moment because you have a leg injury, the TAC can reimburse your alternative travel costs.

Your health professional should provide a written request which states that you are not able to travel to work in your usual way. They should also indicate what other forms of transport are suitable for you, for example, public transport.

The travel to work benefit is payable for a maximum of 24 weeks and is capped at a maximum of \$1,460*.

If travel is hindering your return to work, contact the TAC to discuss the 'Travel to work' benefit.

*This amount is updated every year on 1 July.

The most important person in any successful return to work is you.

Return to work program

If you require additional support to return to work because of your accident injuries, the TAC will contact you to discuss a return to work program.

This could involve an assessment of your workplace to determine whether you have any special needs when returning to work.

As part of a return to work program the TAC can offer your employer incentives to support you in your return to work. These include:

- Paying WorkCover insurance for the period of your return to work program
- Offering wage subsidies to compensate your employer financially, while you return to your normal hours and duties
- Paying for modifications to your workplace
- Purchasing equipment to help with your return to work.

If, because of your accident injuries, you are unable to return to the same type of employment you had before your accident, or if your job is no longer available, the TAC can refer you to a vocational provider to explore other work options.

As with all aspects of a successful return to work, you should contact the TAC on 1300 654 329 to discuss what options are available to you.

Getting information and support

Returning to work is a team effort. The TAC will work with you, your employer and your health professional to help make your transition back to work a smooth one.

If you are unsure about your return to work, or if you have questions about anything in this brochure, contact our Customer Service Centre on 1300 654 329 and speak to someone who can help.

More information on returning to work can be found at www.tac.vic.gov.au



Do seek advice from your health professional about returning to work



Do stay in touch with your employer and let them know how you're going



Do contact the TAC if you have questions about your return to work



Do set goals for your return to work



Don't try and rush back to work if you're not ready



Don't worry if you have a setback – call the TAC for help

Mark's story

Mark works in a warehouse and injured his shoulder when he had an accident on his motorcycle. As his job is physical in nature, his employer had some reservations about taking him back in case he was re-injured.

The injury to Mark's shoulder was quite bad and required surgery. His doctor told him to rest up for a couple of weeks and avoid strenuous activity. The doctor advised Mark that it would be some time before he could do any heavy lifting which meant not being able to go back to work on full duties.

Mark was frustrated and bored sitting around the house all day. He wasn't able to do many jobs around the house and was sick of day time television. The TAC called Mark to see how he was going after his accident and to ask if he'd thought about a return to work. Mark told the TAC officer that his doctor had advised he had capacity for light duties but his employer was reluctant to take him back in case he got re-injured.

The TAC officer advised Mark that he might be suitable for a return to work program and that the TAC could offer his employer some incentives such as WorkCover insurance to ease their concerns.

The TAC officer then spoke to Mark's employer about a return to work program. The officer explained that the TAC could organise a work place assessment by an Occupational Therapist and offer WorkCover insurance. The program meant that Mark gradually increased his hours and workload as his injury healed. Mark also organised with his work mates to car pool to work as he wasn't able to ride to work because of his injury. When he wasn't able to car pool Mark took the train to work and was able to use the TAC's 'Travel to work' benefit to have his travel costs reimbursed.

When Mark returned to work he sent his payslips to the TAC so that he could have his pay topped up each week. The payslips also allowed the TAC to pay his employer wage subsidies while he was on the return to work program.

With the support of his GP, employer and the TAC, Mark has almost completed his return to work program and is getting back to his normal hours and workload. By following the advice of his GP and the guidelines of his return to work program his injury has improved and he has been able to resume his normal routine.



Frequently asked questions

The TAC will work with you, your health professional and your employer to find the best way of managing your return to work.

How do I know if I am ready to return to work?

You should visit your doctor and discuss this with them. They are in the best position to advise you on your capacity to work and any tasks you should modify or avoid to prevent a flare up.

If you aren't able to go back to work at full capacity, speak to your employer and the TAC about alternative duties. Even if you aren't ready to go back to work full-time, you may be able to return to light duties to help with your recovery.

Does my employer have to keep my job open? What assistance can the TAC give to my employer?

There are no provisions in the *Transport Accident Act, 1986* that require an employer to keep a job open for a worker injured in a transport accident.

If your employer has indicated that they may not be able to keep your job open while you recover from your injury, you should contact the TAC to discuss what options are available.

The TAC can offer your employer incentives to help with your return to work. This could include a vocational allowance, where a subsidy is paid to your employer to compensate the cost of supporting you in your return to work. The TAC may also be able to offer WorkCover insurance as part of a return to work program.

 More information about employer incentives can be found on pages 2 and 3 of this brochure and in the brochure '*Returning to work – information for employers*', available on our website, or by calling us on 1300 654 329.

The TAC policy on employer incentives can be found at www.tac.vic.gov.au, under the search term 'return to work programs'.



1300 654 329



www.tac.vic.gov.au



myTAC

If I lose my job will the TAC help me find a new one?

If you are no longer employed because of your accident injuries, the TAC can assist you with job seeking services as part of a return to work program.

If you have lost your job because of your accident, please call us on 1300 654 329 to discuss your options.

Will the TAC organise or pay for retraining if I can't go back to my normal job?

If, because of your accident injuries, the long term prognosis is that you will not be able to return to your pre-accident employment, the TAC will refer you to a vocational provider. Jobs you can do with your current skills will be looked at first, however, the TAC may consider funding a retraining program. You should contact the TAC to discuss this option if your doctor doesn't believe you can go back to your normal work in the long term.

The TAC policy on vocational retraining can be found at www.tac.vic.gov.au, under the search term 'vocational retraining'.

What happens if I have a flare up or can't continue my return to work program?

If you have a flare up to your accident injury you should see your doctor as soon as possible. Your doctor should provide you with a certificate of capacity stating what impact this has had on your capacity to work.

You should contact the TAC if you have any difficulties coping with your workload or accident injury. The TAC will work with you, your doctor and your employer to find the best way of managing your return to work.

What if I am unemployed, can the TAC help me find work?

If you were unemployed at the time of your accident, you may be eligible for return to work support which includes help with job seeking and resumé preparation.

 You should contact us on 1300 654 329 to discuss your options.

Will the TAC help me with travel to and from work?

The TAC can pay for travel to and from work if you are unable to travel in your normal way because of your accident injuries. For more information on how to claim the travel to work benefit see page 2 of this brochure or go to **www.tac.vic.gov.au** and search for 'travel to work'.

The TAC will work with you, your doctor and your employer to find the best way of managing your return to work.

What happens if I have time off because of surgery?

You should contact the TAC for prior approval before having any accident related surgery.

If, after you have returned to work, you need more time off because of TAC approved surgery, you should also obtain a certificate of capacity from your doctor which details how your capacity to work is affected and how long it will be affected.

Where appropriate your return to work program will be modified to accommodate this time off. The TAC will continue to support you in your return to work as long as you have a certificate of capacity.



Trisha's story

Trisha suffered a soft tissue neck and back injury in a rear end collision three months ago. She works in an office and wasn't able to return to work until eight weeks after her accident.

At first Trisha didn't know when she would be able to get back to work as the pain and stiffness in her neck and back were quite bad. Her doctor gave her some medication which helped to relieve her pain, but the stiffness meant it was hard for her to move around. She had to stop going for walks with her regular walking group and missed getting out with her friends.

Trisha was referred by her doctor to see a physiotherapist. The physio showed her some exercises she could do at home to help manage her injury with the aim of returning to work. This, along with regular treatment sessions at the physio helped the soreness in Trisha's neck and back and improved her mobility.

A few weeks after her accident the TAC called Trisha to see how she was going. Although she could move around more, Trisha didn't think she was ready to go back to work as her pain was still quite bad.

The TAC officer asked Trisha to talk to her doctor about the types of activities she can do while recovering. Trisha's doctor thought she might be ready to return to work in a few more weeks, but recommended that she take regular breaks and keep up with her exercises as sitting for long periods at her desk might be difficult for her.

The TAC spoke to Trisha's employer to see if it was possible for Trisha to return to work at reduced hours while she recovered.

At first Trisha worked two half days a week and had a physio appointment in between. She set small goals for her recovery that helped to keep her on track with her return to work. Even so, Trisha wasn't able to manage things at work and had to take more time off.

The TAC worked with Trisha, her employer and her physio to develop a more suitable return to work plan. This time she returned on Mondays and Fridays which gave her more time for recovery and treatment in between. She was careful not to overdo things but tried to increase her activity a little bit each day so that she kept moving forward in her recovery.

Occasionally the pain in her neck and back flares up at work but keeping up with her exercises has helped Trisha overcome this. She no longer relies on her medication to relieve the pain and is confident she will be able to get back to her walking group and go walking with her friends.

Contact us

8.30am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday



1300 654 329 (local call from a landline)

1800 332 556 (free call)



Address

60 Brougham Street, Geelong VIC 3220



Mailing address

TAC, Reply Paid 2751, Melbourne VIC 3001



www.tac.vic.gov.au



myTAC



Manage your TAC claim with ease using **myTAC**, our mobile app and web portal.

Use **myTAC** to submit reimbursement forms, send us an enquiry and find out what services you can use without having to call us for approval.

Download **myTAC** from the Apple iTunes Store, Google Play Store or visit our website.

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For information about the TAC in your own language, call one of the numbers listed here:

العربية
1300 138 639

Ελληνικά
1300 138 642

廣東話
1300 138 640

Türkçe
1300 139 073

Polski
1300 139 072

Hrvatski
1300 138 641

Tiếng Việt
1300 139 074

English
1300 139 076

Italiano
1300 138 643

All other languages
1300 139 075

普通话
1300 139 071

