



Information for General Practitioners

Helping a patient with a compensable injury or illness return to work

1. Assess your patient's capacity taking into consideration the injury / illness.
2. Emphasise that returning to work is an important part of recovery. Talk about what they can do back at work and discuss any barriers.
3. Talk to your patient about the health benefits of work and the potential health risks of not working.
4. Set realistic expectations with your patient about their return to work, including an estimate for when they can expect to return.
5. Recommend a graduated increase in activity and set a timeline for return to work.
6. Clearly specify your patient's capacity on the medical certificate – include any restrictions, where appropriate. For example, can lift up to 2 kg to shoulder height.
7. In order to assist your patient's recovery, communicate with their employer and/or insurer (preferably while the patient is with you) about their capacity.
8. Give guidance on how to avoid recurrence and re-injury.
9. Review the employer's Return to Work Arrangements with your patient to ensure they match the certified capacity and if so approve, if not modify.
10. Review your patient's progress and, if necessary, make recommendations for support services to help them recover and return to work.

The GP's role in supporting return to work

ASSESS

what your patient can do

ADVISE

your patient about the health benefits of returning to work

SET EXPECTATIONS

provide a timeline for recovery and return to work

CERTIFY CAPACITY

based on what your patient can do

REVIEW

your patient's progress and consider referrals if necessary

Where there is no capacity

Why is there no capacity? How can these reasons be addressed? Consider any services that may assist a return to work.

Resources to help you

A range of materials have been developed to support you in your return to work role. This includes online modules about the health benefits of safe work and the role of the GP in return to work. These modules are available via NHV's learning portal at <http://nhv.lingellearning.com/login/index.php>.

For resources and links including user guide for completing the TAC/WVA Certificate of Capacity visit tac.vic.gov.au/gp or wva.vic.gov.au/gp.

Work absence tends to perpetuate itself: that is, the longer someone is off work, the less likely they become ever to return.

If the person is off work for:

- 20 days the chance of ever getting back to work is 70%;
- 45 days the chance of ever getting back to work is 50%; and
- 70 days the chance of ever getting back to work is 35%.

Johnson D, Fry T. *Factors Affecting Return to Work after Injury: A study for the Victorian WorkCover Authority*. Melbourne: Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research; 2002.