

Talking about a return to work – conversation starters

Returning to work after an injury is a critical part of rehabilitation, and GPs play an important role in helping their patients get back to work in an appropriate and safe way. Part of this role is getting the conversation started early, and encouraging patients to start thinking positively about their recovery.

This can sometimes be an awkward or difficult conversation, so these phrases offer ideas to help you get the conversation started.

- Let's look at what you can do, not what you can't do.
- Work is an important part of your rehabilitation and recovery.
- Even if you're not doing your usual tasks at first, being at work, busy, distracted and socially engaged is much better for you than staying at home.
- We don't want to put you in a situation that aggravates your condition, but if you just stay at home and rest, it's likely that your recovery will be slower and your pain will be worse.
- Even though you have an injured X (body part), what can the rest of you do?
- I know it's pretty uncomfortable for you at the moment, but the best treatment involves keeping as active as the pain will allow.
- I can see it hurts but fortunately it's not serious. Being active within your limitations now will help you recover faster.
- There's a difference between pain that hurts and pain that harms. I'd expect you to experience some pain regardless of whether you're back at work, but that doesn't mean you're doing any harm.
- Nobody knows your work environment better than you do, so let's work together and ease you back in.
- Being back at work, doing activities that don't put you at any risk is part of managing this injury.
- You're making steady progress – I would expect you to continue to improve and be able to start on modified duties after your next appointment.
- There's a strong body of evidence that an early return to work will give you the best outcome. I would expect for your injury that you could be back at work within X days/weeks.
- "It's time to get back on the **HORSE**"
- **Hurdles:** What's stopping you from going back to work?
- **Optimism:** Let's focus on what you CAN do rather than what you CAN'T
- **Rewards:** Getting back to work will benefit you financially, socially and psychologically
- **Schedule:** Let's set up a schedule for getting you back to work with appropriate duties and hours
- **Expectations:** What are your expectations of returning to work? What are your employer's expectations?



**There's a better place to recover from an injury.
Returning to work sooner can be the best medicine.**

Talk with your patients about what they can do back at work.



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