



Returning to work after your injury

So, you're back at work—congratulations! This is an exciting step in your recovery journey, but we know that it can also be a bit daunting. Below are some practical tips that might help you. Remember, your vocational therapist will continue to support you and your employer, including arranging meetings to discuss your progress, reviewing your return-to-work plan and addressing any issues as they arise.

Return-to-work tips:

Communicating with work colleagues

- When you first return to work, your colleagues may want to know how you are doing and why you are working fewer hours or doing different duties. Speak with your therapist about what you are comfortable disclosing so that you have a response prepared.

Take your time and pace yourself

- When you do start work, give yourself time to adjust to your new routine. Try to keep your evenings quiet, so you have time to rest and prepare for your next day of work.
- During your workday, plan regular rest breaks to help manage fatigue.

Plan a gradual return

- In the first days back, plan time to catch up with any changes or new projects that have occurred while you have been away.
- It is normal to find some work tasks are more difficult. Your therapist will help plan a gradual return, starting with familiar, less demanding work or reduced hours.

- It may be possible to identify one or two aspects of your job that can be done at your own pace and without strict deadlines.
- As you progress, you may be tempted to do a 'bit more' than was planned. Try to stick to your planned hours and speak with your therapist if you feel you can take on more—you will want any increase in hours or responsibility to be manageable in the long term.
- There is no 'rule' for how long a full return to work can take. Some people find that they need 6 months or more, depending on the nature of their injury and the type of work they do.

Reduce distractions

- Reducing distractions and limiting multi-tasking can help you focus on the task at hand and reduce stress. For example, plan times to catch up on phone calls and emails so they don't interrupt your concentration.
- Someone may need to supervise or check your work to ensure safety and accuracy in the early stages of returning to work. This will also provide you with reassurance of your progress and help reduce your stress.

Focus on work-life balance

- Remember that work is one part of your life, and you need to have the time and energy for family life, socialising, exercise, and so on. Think about keeping a balance across all the meaningful aspects of your life and speak with the rehabilitation team if you are having difficulty with this.

