

## A CHANGING APPROACH TO RETURN TO WORK

In the past, workers and employers thought that injured workers could return to work only when they'd fully recovered. Today, health care professionals, labour organizations, workers' advocates, many employers, and WorkSafeBC (the Workers' Compensation Board) understand and promote safe and productive work as a form of therapy.



## WHAT IS RETURN TO WORK?

It's simple. If you're an injured worker, you can return to your job or a modification of your job while you recover. The hours of work may be modified to suit your recovery or you may return to work on a part-time basis while your treatment continues. Your employer usually manages the return-to-work process along with your doctor and WorkSafeBC.

A return-to-work program outlines how the employer will coordinate a return to work if a worker is injured. A return-to-work plan is customized to suit each injured worker's specific needs. The plan takes into consideration the worker's capabilities and limitations and the recommendations of the worker's doctor.

You don't have to be fully recovered from your injury in order to return to work. In fact, a well-planned and gradual return-to-work program, where the job is modified to suit your capabilities, will assist your recovery.

## MAJOR BENEFITS

A return-to-work program benefits your recovery by:

- Helping you recover more rapidly and more completely
- Reducing financial uncertainty for you and your family
- Keeping you involved in the workplace

Many employers are beginning to realize that returning employees to work in a safe and timely manner helps to:

- Maintain good labour relationships
- Reduce the cost of training a replacement
- Demonstrate that they value their employees



## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Your role

Keep in touch with your employer. This will help your employer identify appropriate duties and it will also maintain your connection to the workplace. Make sure you understand your obligations if your employer has a formal return-to-work program already in place.

Discuss your recovery with your doctor. Be sure you understand how long your doctor thinks it will take before you're able to return to work. If you belong to a union, contact your representative. Your union may have a staff person who knows about return-to-work programs.

### Your doctor's role

Your doctor can play a major role in the return-to-work process, especially in helping match your capabilities to workplace opportunities. Your doctor can set return-to-work timelines based on your capabilities. These timelines indicate both the earliest date for your safe return to work, as well as the date for a return to full duties.

Your family doctor will discuss your medical condition with your employer only if you provide consent. If you're not comfortable with your



family doctor discussing your medical condition with your employer; your doctor can contact WorkSafeBC. We'll work with your doctor and employer to arrange a return-to-work plan.

Once your doctor has approved a plan, you should understand your obligations. Discuss your doctor's recommendations with him or her, so that you know what you're expected to do to assist your recovery.

### Your employer's role

Your employer will develop a return-to-work plan based on your capabilities and whatever alternative work is appropriate. WorkSafeBC is available to assist in this area.

### It's a team effort

You, your doctor, your employer, WorkSafeBC, or your treatment provider can start a return-to-work plan. Anyone can start the process. In fact, many individuals can become involved in the process, including workers, their representatives, their employers, doctors, treatment therapists, and one or more WorkSafeBC employees.

If you're enrolled in a WorkSafeBC-approved rehabilitation program, a registered therapist may contact your employer to discuss safe return-to-work opportunities. Contributions from all members of the team will ensure a successful outcome.

### WHAT ABOUT RE-INJURY?

Both employers and employees may have concerns regarding the possibility of re-injury during the course of a return-to-work program. However, a gradual return-to-work plan, established with the involvement of your doctor, will reduce the risk of further injury.

### IN SUMMARY

- A safe and timely return-to-work plan benefits you, your family, and your employer.
- Involving your doctor in your recovery timelines increases the success of a return-to-work plan.

### CLAIMS CALL CENTRE

#### Provincial Call Centre

6951 Westminster Highway, Richmond BC  
Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.  
Phone 604 231-8888  
Toll-free 1 888 967-5377

#### Direct all claims correspondence to:

PO Box 4700 Stn Terminal  
Vancouver BC V6B 1J1  
Toll-free fax 1 888 922-8807  
Greater Vancouver fax 604 233-9777

Visit the WorkSafeBC website at [WorkSafeBC.com](http://WorkSafeBC.com) for more information.

# RETURN TO WORK IS GOOD THERAPY



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