

# Returning to Work

## How Physiotherapists Can Help!



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Returning to work after an illness, surgical procedure, motor vehicle accident, workplace injury or a slip and fall at home can be challenging and sometimes scary for many people. Getting back to work has lots of benefits and often there is a misconception that a worker needs to be pain free to return to work. It’s common to feel anxious to go back to work and it could even be harder if the injury occurred on the job. Physiotherapists are experts in rehabilitation, exercise, and return to work programming, and are here to make the process easier for you and your employer.

Returning to work in a timely manner after an incident helps reduce the chance of your condition becoming chronic, reduces lost work time, improves mental health, decreases lost income, and prevents re-injury. Studies have shown that attending work enhances the workers sense of purpose, identity, independence and self-worth by being able to participate in society where being employed is the norm. The sooner someone can return to work the sooner they can also return to the activities they enjoy such as hobbies, social groups, sports and recreational activities.

Physiotherapists are trained healthcare professionals that are able to diagnosis and treat an illness or injury following an evidence-based approach. With completion of a thorough history with you and your unique job demands, a customized plan will be created with a timeline and realistic goals and expectations about your return to work. To aid you in a timely recovery the physiotherapist will provide hands-on treatment, education, pain management

techniques, and safe exercises to simulate your work demands. Physiotherapists are here to support you each step of the way, and to make the transition back to work as seamless as possible.

A return-to-work plan can involve safe and suitable work as part of your recovery process. Temporary modification to your duties can be discussed with you, your employer, and the physiotherapist to allow you a trial of return to work while you are still recovering. Modified duties can include reducing heavy loads, limit overhead reaching, avoiding repetition in tasks, and reducing the pace with adding micro-breaks for stretching. A gradual return to work plan could involve modifying your hours or number of days per week that you attend work.

Changing your work environment can also be a suggestion a physiotherapist can make to your employer. This could involve an ergonomic assessment of your desk set-up, modifications to the weight of your work belt, anti-fatigue mats for standing positions, and any specialized equipment that can aid you in your job while respecting your recovery time. If you have been off work for an extended period, a work hardening program could be recommended with attending the clinic a few times per week to address issues of strength, endurance, flexibility, postural tolerance and cardiovascular fitness.

Recovery is not straight forward, and you may feel ready to return to some duties but remain hesitant with others. A coordinated plan between your physiotherapist, employer and you usually result in a safe, and successful return that you can feel confident in!

**YOUR PHYSIOTHERAPIST HAS THE ABILITY TO USE A BROAD RANGE OF TREATMENT TECHNIQUES TO HELP YOU GET BETTER.**

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