

Returning to work after an injury or illness can assist your recovery. It is important you return to work at the most appropriate time for your work-related injury or illness. It is also important you return to good work, this will enable you to continue to recover and stay at work.

Thinking and planning about how and when you will return to work improves your chances of returning to work at the most appropriate time for your injury or illness.

A return to work (RTW) case conference may assist you, your employer and your GP to plan for and support the process of returning to work and, if appropriate, your ongoing recovery at work.

WHAT IS A RTW CASE CONFERENCE?

A RTW case conference is a meeting between you, your employer and your GP to discuss:

- what you are able to do at work including alternate duties
- what and how many hours you are able to work
- what supports you may need to assist your return to work
- what supports you may need to assist you to stay at work as you recover
- your timeline for return to work including progress updates and follow up appointments.

At a RTW case conference, you can explain how your work-related injury or illness affects you and how it affects what you can do at work. It is an opportunity to discuss the support you need to return to work or continue at work.

WHO WILL BE AT THE RTW CASE CONFERENCE?

You, your employer and your GP will be at the RTW case conference. Your employer may be your manager or supervisor, your rehabilitation case manager or your workplace rehabilitation provider.

The RTW case conference may include other people who can contribute to your recovery and return to work—for example, treatment providers (i.e. physiotherapist, psychologist) or the insurer. You may also like to have another person with you—for example, carer, family member, union delegate. It is important that you know who is attending the conference and that you consent to their attendance.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AT THE RTW CASE CONFERENCE?

Your rehabilitation case manager or your workplace rehabilitation provider will generally organise and run the RTW case conference. Sometimes the insurer or your GP may fulfil this role.

The rehabilitation case manager or your workplace rehabilitation provider will discuss the purpose of the RTW case conference with you, your GP and other attendees. They will develop a plan for the RTW case conference that will include:

- when and where the RTW case conference will be held (this will usually be your GPs rooms)
- who will attend
- what will be discussed including the goal for the discussion and what supports you may need to assist your recovery and RTW
- what background information will be included to assist the discussion and planning for your return to work.

A RTW case conference will generally last 30 to 60 minutes.

At the RTW case conference, you can expect:

- to feel respected, trusted and listened to
- everyone involved to discuss and agree on the actions and goals developed
- a plan to be produced containing actions to support your return to and recovery at work

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO BEFORE THE RTW CASE CONFERENCE?

A RTW case conference will assist you, and those helping you to recover and return to work, to identify what supports you need to help you work safely and effectively. You may be planning to return to work or already be back at work.

Before attending a RTW case conference it is important to consider:

- what your job involves
- what you are able to do at work
- what may need altering, and
- what supports you may need.

Some things to think about are:

- How is your condition at the moment? Are you getting better, staying the same or getting worse?
- What activities are you currently able to do at home, at work? Do you need any supports?
- What kind of work are you able to do? What work is available in your workplace? What alternative options might be available?
- How many hours or for how long do you feel you would be able to work? How might you use breaks, part time hours, alternate days etc. to help you to return to work?
- Are there alternative ways that you could work? What options are there for changing hours, working from home, using different technology?
- What do your managers and co-workers need to know to be able to support you in your recovery at or return to work?

You may find it useful to write down your answers to these or similar questions and bring them with you to the RTW case conference.

HOW DO I GET THE MOST OUT OF THE CASE CONFERENCE?

The RTW case conference is an opportunity for you to ask questions and discuss what support you need to return to work or stay at work.

It is important to share reports and documentation about your injury or illness that are relevant to your situation. It is important you provide information relevant to your return to work. If you are unsure about what information to provide, discuss with your GP or seek advice from others—for example, union delegate. You should provide consent to any information shared by your GP or treatment providers.

Discussing the purpose and goals for the RTW case conference with your rehabilitation case manager or workplace rehabilitation provider before the RTW case conference will assist you with preparing for the discussion. However, you may need time to consider what is discussed in the RTW case conference before agreeing to the actions—you can ask for the RTW case conference to be reconvened (or rescheduled).

A RTW case conference is to discuss your return to work with your employer and others involved in your return to work. You can organise an appointment before or after the RTW case conference if you need to speak privately with your GP.

If you have any questions or concerns about attending a RTW case conference you can discuss these matters with your rehabilitation case manager or workplace rehabilitation provider to ensure that you get the best out of a RTW case conference. Alternatively they can discuss with you any alternative ways of communicating with those involved in your return to work about your recovery and the supports you may need.