



Australian Government

Comcare

Return to work

An overview for employees

Getting back to work after an illness or injury can feel overwhelming, but you're not alone. There's a team of people ready to support you.



Your return to work team

Rehabilitation case manager (case manager)

Your case manager is a representative of your employer, who is your main point of contact for workplace rehabilitation. They will:

- > coordinate your return to work program (also called a rehabilitation program) and ensure it aligns with your needs
- > help connect you with a rehabilitation provider if needed
- > ensure key people like your employer, doctor and rehabilitation provider work together to support your recovery
- > give you advice about your rights and responsibilities under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*
- > consult with you when developing your return to work program.

Supervisor

With your consent and agreement on the best way to communicate, your supervisor stays in touch with you. They will:

- > work with your case manager to modify your duties if needed
- > help create a safe and supportive workplace for your return
- > respect your privacy and handle your information sensitively.

Doctor

Your doctor plays a big role in your recovery. They will:

- > provide medical treatment to help you recover
- > complete medical certificates that outline what work you can do while you recover and return to work (these are called Certificates of Capacity)
- > advise on any work adjustments or other changes that might help you return safely
- > work with the case manager and rehabilitation provider to make sure your treatment plan supports your work goals.

Workplace rehabilitation provider (rehabilitation provider)

If you need extra support, a rehabilitation provider may help. They:

- > assess what duties you're able to do and what support you might need
- > work with you, your doctor and your employer to develop a tailored return to work program
- > identify any barriers stopping you from returning to work and find ways to overcome them
- > help you build your confidence and skills so you can get back to work safely.

Return to work process

Returning to work is an important part of recovery, and there are steps in place to help you get back safely when you're ready.

Below is a typical return to work path where your workers compensation claim has been accepted and your employer supports you to engage in rehabilitation activities, which may include a rehabilitation assessment and a return to work program. Everyone's return to work journey is different and yours may not include all these steps.

You'll find more about each step later in this document.

Return to work path

Reporting your illness or injury

You notify your employer about your illness, injury or incident and decide whether you will make a workers' compensation claim.

Your supervisor contacts you to discuss your needs.

1



Connecting you with support

Your supervisor notifies a case manager.
Your case manager contacts you to discuss support options.

2



Understanding your needs

Your case manager reviews the available information from your doctor.

Your case manager decides whether a rehabilitation assessment would be appropriate.

3



Rehabilitation assessment

If needed, your case manager arranges a rehabilitation assessment with a rehabilitation provider.

Your case manager reviews the assessment report.

4



Developing your return to work program

Your case manager decides whether a rehabilitation program would be appropriate.

You, your case manager, supervisor and the rehabilitation provider develop the program.

5



Monitoring your progress

Your case manager, rehabilitation provider, supervisor and doctor monitor your progress and adjust the program as needed.

If you don't need a program your case manager will still support and monitor your progress.

6



Returning to work

Your case manager closes your program and continues to check in.

7



Your role in recovery

You have rights and responsibilities in the return to work process. Your return to work team is there to help, but you play a key role in your own recovery.

How you can help your recovery

- > **Let your employer know about your illness or injury** as soon as possible.
- > **Talk to your supervisor or case manager** about how they can help you, and your options for workplace rehabilitation.
- > **Follow your treatment plan** and, if required, attend any medical or rehabilitation assessments.
- > **Work with your case manager** in developing your return to work program
- > **Actively participate** in your return to work program.
- > **Be open** about the supports you need and any challenges you face.
- > **Keep your employer updated** about your recovery and any time off work due to your illness or injury.

Return to work process in more detail

Step 1:



Reporting your illness or injury

The first step is to let your employer know about your injury, illness or workplace incident as soon as possible. You may do this by contacting your supervisor or your HR team, or by lodging an online incident notice. Your employer will:

- > talk with you about what happened and how it's affecting your work
- > identify any immediate risks and make changes to prevent further injury
- > start the early intervention process to support your recovery.

Reporting early helps you get support faster and can prevent things from getting worse.

Step 2:



Connecting you with support

Once your supervisor knows about your illness or injury, they will:

- > notify the case manager, who will help coordinate your return to work program
- > talk with you about workplace support options, such as temporary changes to your job or extra help at work
- > let you know that the case manager will contact you to discuss next steps.

The sooner you have a program in place, the sooner you can focus on recovering with the right support.

Step 3:



Understanding your needs

The case manager will look at your situation and work out what support you need to help you return to work. As part of this they will:

- > talk to you about your illness or injury, recovery goals and work capacity
- > contact your treatment provider to obtain information about your rehabilitation needs and rely on this information as much as possible
- > consider if you need a rehabilitation assessment to develop a personalised return to work program
- > identify any workplace adjustments that could make your return to work easier.

Everyone's recovery is different, so this step makes sure the supports offered are tailored to your individual needs.

Step 4:



Rehabilitation assessment

If a rehabilitation assessment is needed, your case manager will:

- > seek your views about the assessor and whether you require a support person
- > arrange for a rehabilitation provider to assess what duties you can do safely
- > review the assessment report
- > work with you and your doctor to understand any work restrictions
- > identify suitable duties based on your usual role and on your current capacity.

Your case manager must follow certain requirements to decide about and arrange a rehabilitation assessment. You can read more about these requirements on the Comcare website.

Step 5:



Developing your rehabilitation program

Once your assessment is complete, your case manager will:

- > decide if you need a formal return to work program
- > work with your rehabilitation provider (if needed), doctor and employer to create an individualised program
- > ensure everyone involved understands the program's goals, expectations and responsibilities.

A clear program helps everyone know the goals and activities to reach those goals and sets you up for success. Your employer must take reasonable steps to provide you with suitable duties while you are completing the return to work program.

Step 6:



Monitoring your progress

Returning to work isn't always a straight path. Your program is flexible and may need adjustments along the way. Here's what happens:

- > While you do your program your case manager, supervisor and doctor will monitor your progress with you.
- > If barriers arise, your team will work together to adjust the program to better suit your needs.
- > If minor changes (such as extra time or extra support) are needed, your case manager will update your return to work program.
- > If your goals change significantly, a new program may be developed to better fit your recovery.

If you don't need a return to work program, your case manager will still monitor your recovery and support you.

Step 7:



Returning to work and closing your program

Once you've successfully returned to work, your case manager will close your rehabilitation program and continue to check in for a while to ensure you're doing well.

Even after you return to work, support is still available to make sure your recovery stays on track.

If you have any concerns at any stage, talk to your case manager – they're there to help.

More information

Contact Comcare for information and advice on your claim:

Call **1300 366 979**

Email general.enquiries@comcare.gov.au

For information about recovery and return to work, visit the Comcare website:

www.comcare.gov.au/roles/workers

www.comcare.gov.au/claims/getting-you-back-to-work/return-to-work-claimants