

## Advice for employees on working with a long-term medical condition

This guide provides advice on coping at work when you have a long-term (also called chronic) medical problem. The conditions covered include asthma, diabetes, cancer, arthritis or any other long-term medical condition. It is designed to help find practical solutions that will benefit both you and your employer.

For further guidance to living with a long-term condition, please visit [www.nhs.uk/Planners/Yourhealth/Pages/Yourhealth.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Planners/Yourhealth/Pages/Yourhealth.aspx)

### Practical steps

Although not always appropriate, continuing to work when you are able can be beneficial in the medium and long term.

When you have a long-term medical condition, your employer may be able to make simple adjustments to your work, which can make a significant difference. To start with, it may help to have an open and practical discussion with your manager about your situation. This should focus on simple steps that could be taken to modify the workplace to meet your needs.

### Having the conversation

You should, of course, have any conversation about your medical condition in private and your manager will keep the details confidential. If you feel uncomfortable, you might wish to ask a colleague, union representative or friend to join you.

You may have statutory protection requiring your employer to make adjustments to your workplace and the work you do. However, whether or not this is the case, you should discuss with your manager how they could make adjustments to meet your needs.



### These may include:

- adjustments to your workspace
- changes to your working hours
- flexible working practices
- changing the way you work (for example, being allowed more breaks)
- equipment that may help reduce the demands on you
- phased return to work after sickness absence
- adjusting performance targets
- redistributing work

Of course, your condition might change over time, so do try to keep your manager informed so they can make further arrangements to help you.

### Your rights at work

If you have a long-term medical condition, such as cancer (and others), you may be protected by legislation. You may also have the right to request help such as flexible working.

For further guidance on getting support at work, please visit [www.nhs.uk/Planners/Yourhealth/Pages/Gettingsupportatwork.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Planners/Yourhealth/Pages/Gettingsupportatwork.aspx)

### Returning to work

When you think you are ready to return to work, it is important to talk to your GP or another medical practitioner first.

They can confirm whether you are ready and what, if any, workplace adjustments might help. They may also provide you with a 'fit note', which could include recommendations on adjustments at work.

### Occupational Health

You may also want to consult an occupational health professional for advice about coping with a long-term medical condition at work.

Your organisation might have an occupational health service – just ask your manager or HR adviser. There are also a number of national occupational health advice lines – these are listed in the accompanying resource list.

Excellent support organisations exist for most common long-term illnesses, which produce helpful material. You can find these online, and a list of examples accompanies this leaflet.

---

## Further sources of information

[www.nhs.uk/Livewell/workplacehealth/Pages/Workplacehome.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/workplacehealth/Pages/Workplacehome.aspx)

[www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/category.aspx?CategoryID=190](http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/category.aspx?CategoryID=190)

Arthritis	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Osteoarthritis/Pages/living-with.aspx">www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Osteoarthritis/Pages/living-with.aspx</a>
Asthma	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Asthma/Pages/living-with.aspx">www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Asthma/Pages/living-with.aspx</a>
Cancer	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Cancer/Pages/Cancerhome">www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Cancer/Pages/Cancerhome</a>
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease/Pages/living-with.aspx">www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease/Pages/living-with.aspx</a>
Dementia	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Dementia/Pages/living-with.aspx">www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Dementia/Pages/living-with.aspx</a>
Diabetes	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Diabetes-type2/Pages/Living-with.aspx">www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Diabetes-type2/Pages/Living-with.aspx</a>
Epilepsy	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Epilepsy/Pages/living-with.aspx">www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Epilepsy/Pages/living-with.aspx</a>
Heart disease	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Coronary-heart-disease/Pages/Recovery.aspx">www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Coronary-heart-disease/Pages/Recovery.aspx</a>
Kidney disease	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Kidney-disease-chronic/Pages/living-with.aspx">www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Kidney-disease-chronic/Pages/living-with.aspx</a>
Mental health	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx">www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx</a>

---

You can get online at your local library or at a UK Online centre. Simply call **0800 77 1234** to find one near you.

NHS Choices ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) is the UK's leading health website. It is designed to help individuals make informed choices about their health, from lifestyle decisions to the practical aspects of finding and using NHS services.