

## Return to work (RTW) and mental health



Work is important in supporting good mental health and recovery from mental health challenges. Research shows that if you're off work because of an illness or injury, getting back to work quickly often leads to better health overall, improved self-esteem, satisfaction and quality of life.

People who are unemployed tend to have worse mental health overall, feel more distressed, have poorer physical health and may have higher health risk factors (e.g., more cardiovascular risk factors, needing to see their doctor more frequently, using more medication and/or more frequent visits to the hospital)

Returning to work as soon as you are physically and mentally able to do so, even with modified or alternate duties, can help you:

- Recover more quickly and completely from your injury
- Maintain job stability, and keep your knowledge and skills current
- Maintain relationships with your co-workers
- Feel less uncertain about your future
- Reduce the financial impact for you and your family

### Accommodations and RTW

Your employer has a responsibility to accommodate you (within reason and within their means) to help facilitate a safe and timely RTW

Accommodations depend on the job/employer but can include things such as:

- A gradual RTW over time
- Reduced work hours
- Time away from work to attend your rehabilitation appointments
- Modifications to your physical space such as:

- Providing a quiet space to rest
- Providing noise canceling headphones
- Allowing work from home opportunities
- Changing the lighting to be less bright
- Modifications to your duties such as:
  - Providing you with one task at a time to complete (vs. many tasks at the same time)
  - Allowing flexible deadlines and extra time to complete tasks
  - Limiting time spent looking at a screen
  - Providing instructions in writing



Accommodations should be reviewed regularly and may change throughout the course of your recovery.

### Psychotherapy and RTW

Evidence-based psychotherapies can help with:

- Reducing the frequency and intensity of discomfort caused by feelings of depression, anxiety, frustration and anger
- Understanding the link between mental and physical health
- Managing chronic pain
- Assisting with lifestyle changes such as improving sleep and increasing motivation
- Helping to navigate interpersonal relationships at home and at work
- Increasing hopefulness and confidence with RTW
- Making RTW plans successful



LAYLA

Our Layla team of psychotherapists have specific experience and training in working with people who are dealing with injuries, traumatic experiences, and mental health symptoms that impact their ability to work. We believe this specialized training and experience supports clients to progress more quickly towards their goals and optimal mental health and functioning - and ultimately a faster RTW.

### **Additional resources**

#### **Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)**

- CCRW works to connect persons with disabilities to meaningful and equitable employment opportunities as well as supports workplace accommodations
- Connect with them at [info@ccrw.org](mailto:info@ccrw.org) or 1-800-664-0925

#### **March of Dimes**

- March of Dimes vision is to create and an inclusive, barrier-free society for persons with disabilities and offer a variety of programs and services such as:
  - [Brain Injury Services](#)
  - [Rehabilitation - Conductive Education](#)
  - [Employment Services](#)
  - [Accessible Modifications](#)
- Connect with them [here](#)

#### **Spinal Cord Injury Ontario**

- Spinal Cord Injury Ontario supports people living with a spinal cord injury or other disability through services, supports and peer connections.
  - [Regional Services](#) and system navigation support
  - [Peer Program](#) offers mentorship and peer connections workshops
  - [Employment Services](#) for job seekers in Toronto
- Connect with them at [info@sciontario.org](mailto:info@sciontario.org) or (416) 422-5644

#### **Neil Squire Society**

- Neil Squire Society is committed to social inclusion, economic equity and the facilitation of technology solutions to improve productivity for persons with disabilities
- Their [programs](#) include Employment programs, Computer Tutoring Programs to improve digital literacy and Assistive Technology programs
- Connect with them at [on.info@neilsquire.ca](mailto:on.info@neilsquire.ca) or 1-866-939-6345