



EUROPEAN SAFETY WEEK “LIGHTEN THE LOAD” CAMPAIGN PREVENTING MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS



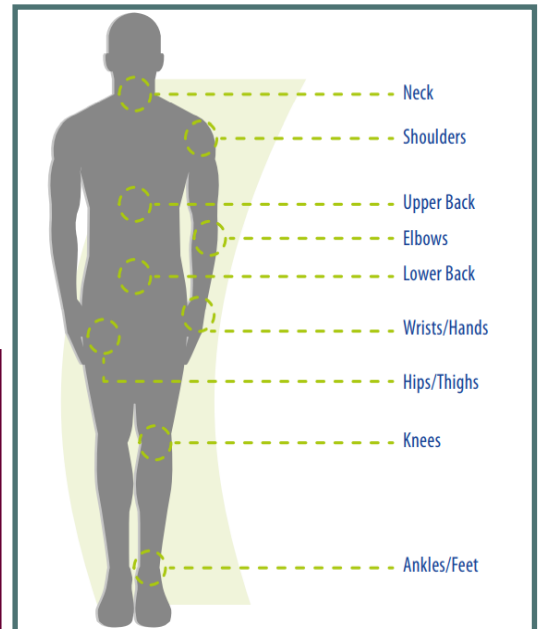
NATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY FUNCTION (NHSF), 2022

REHABILITATION FOLLOWING MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDER

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are one of the most common work-related ailments in the HSE and affect the back, neck, shoulders and upper limbs as well as the lower limbs. They cover any damage or disorder of the joints or other tissues. Health problems range from minor aches and pains to more serious medical conditions requiring time off or medical treatment. Rehabilitation is the third key step in the management of MSDs in the workplace. Engaging in rehabilitation assists employees to return to work sooner. Work meets our psychosocial, financial needs and is a key driver of our physical and mental health.

Rehabilitation is the process of restoring skills after an illness or injury, helping you regain self-sufficiency and function. Modified or accommodated work may support an early return to work activities suitable to your abilities.

You DO NOT need to be fully fit to return to work.



SUPPORTS FOR MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES

The HSE has agreed steps to assist employees, these are outlined in the [Rehabilitation of Employees Back to Work After Illness or Injury Policy & Procedure](#). This provides a structured process to enable employees to stay at work or support them in returning to work following a musculoskeletal injury or illness and requires communication and coordination between the Manager, Employee and Occupational Health.

Training: A specific programme on Work Rehabilitation in the HSE is available on HSELand for line managers to support them in the management referral and rehabilitation processes.

Information: Occupational Health have developed an information booklet for employees titled [Returning to Work from Sick Leave](#). This booklet contains advice and signposting to support employees to return to work as soon as possible following MSD.

Support: Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) 0818 327 327 is a free and confidential independent support service provided for all employees with all psychosocial issues whether personal or work-related.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ROLE

The Occupational Health Service provides an independent, confidential advisory service to both employees and the employer on matters relating to the ‘effect of health on work’ and ‘work on health’. It can provide support for employees with an identified health problem and can advise them and their managers about further supports available.



Employees can be referred by their manager to Occupational Health for absence of over four weeks or in cases where support is required with employee consent. Occupational Health will liaise with the manager and employee to determine if they are fit/unfit for work or whether there are reasonable accommodations that can be made to allow the employee return.

Go to <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-and-services/occupational-health/rehabilitation/>

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR STAFF

Early and regular communication is key to:

- Show support for the employee, answer any questions they have and guide them through the process
- Discuss supports available; Occupational Health, EAP, HR
- Discuss possible rehabilitation opportunities based on their ability to work, now and into the future
- Plan the work based on staffing availability

You **can** ask when the employee may be well enough to return to work

Suggestions for contact when an employee is out of work

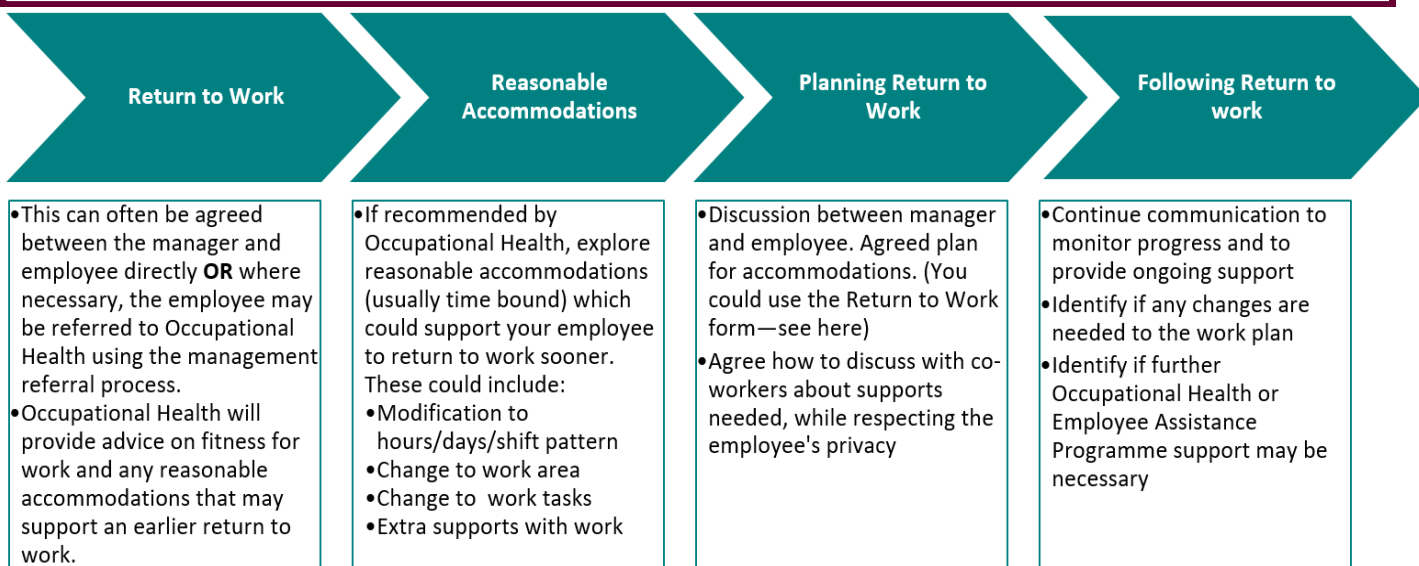
Regular contact:

- An agreed time and format
- Schedule follow up times/days for the next check before the end of the call

Consider:

- Is the employee well enough to take/make calls?
- Is there any reason that they may not be comfortable talking to you about their absence?

REHABILITATION & RETURN TO WORK PROCESS



REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Reasonable accommodation must be investigated to enable a person who has a disability to have access to, participate and advance in employment or to undertake training unless these measures would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer.



Healthy Workplaces
LIGHTEN THE LOAD

Working with musculoskeletal disorders



How can people who develop an MSD be helped



Adjustments in the workplace

This poster is available to download on our [website](#). Why not print it for your staff?

CONTACT US

To log a request for health & safety information, advice or support please go to: <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-services/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-helpdesk.html>

Alternatively contact the National Health & Safety Helpdesk on 1800 420 420 between 10:30 -12:00 and 14:00 – 15.30, Monday to Friday