

Helping clients to stay at work after an injury – workplace rehabilitation



The workplace is often the best place to recover from injury, because of the physical, personal and social benefits it provides. 'Stay at Work', a new vocational rehabilitation service, aims to help our clients, their employers and those involved in their rehabilitation share in these benefits by enabling injured workers to stay at work during their recovery process.

How staying at work can enhance recovery

It can be natural to want to take it easy after an injury – but it is becoming internationally recognised that this is rarely the best approach to recovery.

Staying active by staying at work has been proven to help speed physical recovery. Because work is an important contributor to our sense of self-worth and social connection, staying at work can also help prevent the loss of confidence - and even depression - that can set in during an enforced, injury-related absence. And financially, it's usually a better option to remain at work than spend time off on a reduced income.

Staying at work benefits everyone

Helping our clients recover quicker and more effectively is our core goal. But it's not just our clients who stand to benefit from this service.

For employers

For employers, it can mean you can enjoy the benefits of retaining the expertise and 'in-house' knowledge of injured employees, while also avoiding the need to recruit replacement personnel.

The benefits of an early return to work are:

- reduced costs from lost productivity and overtime
- reduced or eliminated costs of training new staff
- increased speed of recovery for your employee
- access to the employee's skills and knowledge.

For treatment providers

For treatment providers involved with a client's treatment and rehabilitation, it can mean the chances of achieving a successful outcome for the client are significantly enhanced.

Also, treatment providers set patient expectations, and patients respond well to positive recommendations to return to work from their health care professional.

A team approach

Typically, staying at work after injury is much more achievable if appropriate and integrated support is available – both in and outside the workplace. Arranging and helping to provide this support is what ACC's 'Stay at Work' service is all about.

The 'Stay at Work' service uses a team approach to helping people stay at work after injury. The key members of the team will usually include:

- the client and their family/whanau
- the GP, treatment provider and any other health professionals (eg physiotherapists, occupational therapists) involved with the client's recovery
- the client's employer
- the Stay at Work vendor.

How the service works

Stay at Work provides a three-stage service which addresses the spectrum of injuries, and matches these needs with an appropriate level of service. The stages are Stage 1: Early Return to Work (for shorter duration or less complex situations); Stage 2: Graduated Return to Work (for longer duration, or more complex situations); and Stage 3: Continued Interventions (where further, ongoing support is required).

The role of the Stay at Work vendor is to use their clinical expertise to work with all members of the team, to determine exactly what needs to be done to help the client recover from their injury while staying at work or gradually return to work.

This will usually involve the Stay at Work vendor contacting clients, treatment providers and employers to:

- get a clear picture of the client's injury
- establish which activities the client can and cannot do safely
- help the employer assess which work-related short term changes may be necessary, to enable the client to keep working safely and keep making a positive contribution to the workplace
- help the client to stay at work by putting in place supports such as physical aids, that enable them to do their job.

The Stay at Work vendor will work with everyone on the team to find a solution to keep the client at work where possible, or plan the client's return to work if that is more appropriate.

Every situation, and every solution, is different

Staying at work after injury may sometimes mean that a client works reduced hours at first. Or initially, it may be best for them do different types of duties, if their normal duties aren't suitable while they recover from their injury.

No two injuries or workplaces are ever identical, so there will be no 'one size fits all' solution. The Stay

at Work vendor will work closely with everyone on the team to establish what actions are practical and achievable, and will best meet everyone's needs.

What support is available?

ACC is often able to provide a range of support to help our clients stay at work after injury. This can include things like physical aides, and funding for any workplace modifications that may be necessary.

For clients who find it difficult getting to and from work because of their injury, we can explore suitable travel options and assist with travel costs.

We may also be able to help employers meet the wages or salaries of employees who are working reduced hours.

Who qualifies for the Stay at Work service?

Everyone making a claim who could benefit from recovering at work or gradually returning to work will be considered for this service.

The Stay at Work vendor will contact everyone involved as soon as possible after we receive the claim, to discuss how they may be able to assist.

For more information on Stay at Work, please visit www.acc.co.nz/news

Copies are available at any ACC Branch, on our website www.acc.co.nz or by calling **0800 101 996**.