

Returning to work after cancer

An employee's guide

Ideas on adjustments

When you have been away from work, and have experienced a period of treatment that for some can be very intrusive and exhausting, you and your employer will need to consider a graded approach. A shorter working week or daily hours may help you to build your stamina up.

You may still be experiencing poor sleep and become easily tired, therefore a later start may help for a short period of time. If you have been off for some time you may be a bit rusty, so suggest a colleague spends some time with you going through any changes at work, and you can then identify any training you may need.

If you work in an office you are bound to have a million emails!!! Suggest to your manager that for the first few days you just work your way through them to get up to speed.

Depending on how active you are at home, you will need to gauge with your manager how many days or hours to start off with when designing your return to work plan. You may prefer to do full days and start with 2 or 3 first. Some people prefer to do shorter days but work each day of the week. This will depend on the type of job you do, your journey time, cost of travel and your own energy levels.

It may be worth your manager organising an ergonomic assessment, which looks at things like setting your desk up to maintain good posture. If you work at a desk, just a few adjustments to the way you sit and organise your work tools can make all the difference.



Colleagues

You may find it an easy transition back to work, particularly if you have managed to keep in contact and meet up with work colleagues during your absence.

If not, remember that some of your work colleagues may not appreciate what you have gone through and why you are doing less. It is worth chatting to your manager about a good way to let people know what you are doing and why. It's not always easy to do and may be better addressed on a 1x1 basis but it will help. Your colleagues may not know what to say so don't make it hard for them. They will want to be supportive if they can.



Getting back to full-time work



This may take a few weeks or a few months and will depend on a number of factors: your type of cancer or other long term illness and the treatment, whether you are still undergoing treatment, your length of time off work, the type of job you do, to name a few.

It is important that, even though you are back full time, you keep reviewing your progress by chatting to your manager. You may have to adjust your hours again, but that's OK as long as you have agreed any changes beforehand.

When you are back full time you may still feel tired, so be sure to relax, eat properly, exercise regularly get a good nights sleep and remember don't take the world on too quickly.

maggie's Provides free, practical, emotional support for people with cancer and their families and friends

unum.co.uk

Unum Limited is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.

Registered Office and mailing address: Milton Court, Dorking, Surrey RH4 3LZ Registered in England 983768 Unum Limited is a member of the Unum Group of Companies.

We monitor telephone conversations and e-mail communications from time to time for the purposes of training and in the interests of continually improving the quality of service we provide.