

The Better at Work Approach

The evidence and benefits



PREVENTION. CARE. RECOVERY.

Te Kaporeihana Āwhina Hunga Whara

The Better at Work Approach will deliver improved health outcomes for your patients

The Evidence Base

The Better at Work Approach reflects the growing international view that workers heal faster and avoid psychological impairment if they can safely recover in the workplace, or return to it as soon as possible following an injury.

Evidence based research clearly shows the benefits of workplace rehabilitation¹. It is clear from international and local research that in many cases there is no medically justified reason for an injured worker not to return to work immediately. Delaying a return to work can have a negative impact on not just the patient, but also their employer.

Evidence now clearly indicates that prolonged rest may be harmful² – it can delay recovery, increase the risk of chronic pain, and increases the risk of adverse complications from prolonged inactivity.

The Benefits

A patient who has mild to moderate injuries will experience a number of benefits by recovering at work, including:

- Reduced periods of incapacity
- Minimized economic loss
- Treatment and rehabilitation benefits
- Improved access to treatment and rehabilitation
- Additional support networks
- Job retention
- Prevention of the adverse consequences of unemployment.

Understanding and utilising work as a positive treatment and rehabilitation tool can lead to reduced recovery times and successful long-term rehabilitation outcomes for your patient.

1. More information is available at ACCs website via the link www.acc.co.nz/for-providers/better-at-work

2. Hilde G, et al. Advice to stay active as a single treatment for low-back pain and sciatica.

Capacity Certification

When certifying a patients' work capacity on the ACC45 or ACC18, the question should always be asked:

'What is the medical reason why my patient cannot return to work?'

In the majority of instances your patient will be able to complete some work orientated activities, even if these are not directly related to their usual work routine.

Certifying a patient as Fully Unfit (FUF) is only medically justified when:

1. A person needs to be in a place of care
2. A person needs to be confined to home or bed
3. There is a risk of contagion or a need for quarantine
4. There is a need for a protective environment.

In all other instances a patient should be certified as fit for selected work (FFSW) or should be returning to work full time. Certifying FFSW alerts ACC that your patient is eligible to receive support from a range of ACC programmes.

Rehabilitation

ACC has a number of rehabilitation programmes available based on the principles embedded in the Better at Work Approach. These programmes can assist you and your patient in a variety of ways, including:

- liaising with your patients employer to determine alternative work duties
- ensuring that your patients work environment is safe
- providing your patients with vocational and social rehabilitation support.

Certifying a patient as FUF can result in them being unable to access these support services. This can have a negative impact on your patient's overall health outcomes. If you would like more information about the programmes available please talk to your ACC representative, or visit the ACC website via the link www.acc.co.nz

Financial Support

A patient is eligible for weekly compensation from ACC if they are certified as FFSW or FUF.

Additional Information

More information on the Better at Work Approach can be found on ACCs website via the link www.acc.co.nz/for-providers/better-at-work, including links to a range of evidence based articles, and resources that are available for ordering from ACC.