



Return to work (RTW) fact sheet

Generally, RTW can be considered when:

- You can tolerate longer periods of cognitive and physical activity
- Have resumed your usual daily routines and activities whilst the majority of your symptoms have settled.

It is recommended to gain medical clearance by your general practitioner (GP) prior to RTW and talk with your employer about gradually re-entering the work environment.

Each person's RTW plan should be tailored to their specific job role, however as a guide a graded RTW plan may include:

- Reduced initial hours e.g. 3-4 hours per day, two to three days per week
- Reduced responsibilities and consideration of alternative duties
- Consideration of working from home initially prior to returning to the office
- Graded return to usual hours and duties

The aim of the graded RTW program is to re-enter the workforce and over time rebuild your cognitive and physical stamina for your usual work hours and duties with a minimal increase in symptoms.

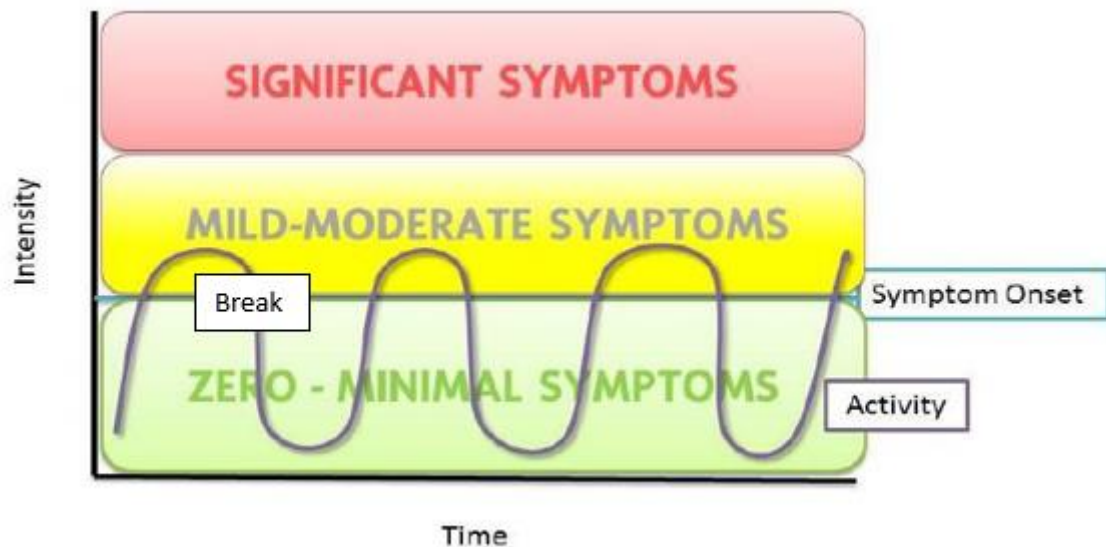
Strategies to support you at work include:

- Pace yourself – take micro-breaks e.g. 5 minutes every 45 minutes to 're-fresh'. It is best to take short breaks before you feel very fatigued and avoid screens or cognitive activities during breaks
- Consider initial flexible working conditions e.g. work from home, no night shifts, quiet area for breaks
- Reducing work demands initially e.g. removing firm time pressures, reduced responsibilities (e.g. high-risk roles, supervisory roles)
- Allow yourself to work methodically on one task at a time
- Prioritise your daily tasks and schedule these into your day – plan your rest breaks intermittently throughout the day to avoid 'pushing through' as this may increase your fatigue or symptoms
- Plan challenging tasks at the beginning of the day when you feel most fresh
- Keep organised – use a diary and schedule to plan your day, keep track of appointments/meetings, writing out a to-do list
- Simplify tasks by breaking large activities into smaller more achievable chunks
- Allow yourself more time to complete activities
- Use memory aids e.g. calendar, diary, alarms, note books



- Reduce distractions where possible e.g. headphones, working in a quiet room, set times for meetings, and have a discussion with your employer about how to limit interruptions
- Maintain open communication between yourself, the employer, and your medical team about your progress

An example of pacing yourself throughout the day when gradually returning to work:



Reference: Ontario Living Concussion Guidelines (2024)

This graph shows how planning activities ahead, pacing, and taking regular short breaks allows you to perform activities across the day without significantly increasing symptoms.

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