

# Tips for talking to workers after an injury

Employer resource



Watch the video

When a worker is injured at work, a supportive employer reaches out straight away with care and concern.

This simple act can help with your worker's recovery and getting back on the job sooner.

**i** First though, when an injury or illness happens at work, there are steps you need to take as an employer, including reporting the injury to WorkCover. Search '**If an injury or illness occurs**' on our website to find our guide.

Here are some tips to make that initial contact count.

## Decide who should reach out

First, think about who should contact your worker. Usually, it's someone they know and trust, like their supervisor or your workplace return to work coordinator.

The best person to reach out is usually someone who can show genuine empathy and concern.

Make sure that person feels prepared for the conversation.

## What should I say, though?

- Reaching out can be as simple as asking your worker how they're doing and if they need any support.
- A simple 'How are you feeling? What can I do to help?' is usually all you need to say the first time you reach out.
- Actively listen to their responses. This means not interrupting and taking note of what they need.
- Sometimes there is stigma about making a claim, and you or your worker might not feel comfortable talking about their injury or illness.
- Let them guide the conversation and don't focus on what led to the injury or illness – that can come later.
- Expressing regret and acknowledging your worker has been injured doesn't mean you are admitting liability for damages if your worker makes a common law claim. Find out more about protection for apologies on our website.

## Make a plan for staying in touch

Once you've made contact, make a plan with your worker for how and when you'll stay in touch.

Ask your worker how they'd like you to check in and how often – this could be in person, by phone call, text message, or even email. This will be different for every person.

## Moving forward

You should continue checking in with your worker, even once they're back at work, to see how they're recovering.

Let your worker know they can reach out to you any time they have concerns or need support.

By staying connected and offering your support, you'll go a long way in helping your worker's recovery.

## Tips for talking to the team about a worker who is ill or injured

When you're talking to the team about a colleague who's ill or injured, here are some tips to keep in mind:

- Ask your worker how much they're comfortable with you sharing with their colleagues.
- Respect their privacy and avoid speculating about the injury or the claim.
- Reassure the team their colleague is getting support and that everyone's focus is on their recovery.
- Getting back to work can feel hard for a worker. They may feel additional stigma if it's a mental health related injury or if they have a claim.
- Remind the team to be supportive and make sure they're aware of any steps you've taken to reduce the impact of their colleague's absence.
- If you can, keep the team updated with timing for when your worker is due back at work, and if they'll be doing suitable duties at the start.

# Getting in touch early with your worker is key to recovery

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How you react and respond to finding out your worker is making a claim can make a world of difference.

When a worker is ill or injured, one of the ways you can have the biggest impact on their recovery and claim is by reaching out early to show your care and support.

As an employer, whether your worker has a physical or a mental injury, it's your role to support them.

## Why get in touch early after an injury or illness?

### It's good for your worker and for business:

Usually, getting in touch early results in your worker getting back to work sooner.

### Timing matters:

Workers who are contacted in the first few days after their injury or illness are twice as likely to be back at work long-term, compared with workers whose employers contacted them after two weeks. So, don't put off making contact.

### Better claim outcomes:

Research also shows workers who felt their employer responded constructively and supported them in their claim were far more likely to get back to work sooner, and up to five times more likely to be back at work by the time their claim closed.

### Staying in the loop:

Staying connected also keeps you updated on your worker's recovery and return to work.

## Is it okay to reach out to a worker during the claim decision process?

The answer is yes and contact during this time can be key to helping your worker recover sooner.

Even if you dispute the circumstances around the claim, it's important to let your worker know you still value them as a person, and care about their recovery.

## Mental health support for your worker

If you do notice your worker's not coping well, there are lots of supports they can access:

### For workers with a physical injury or illness

WorkCover can pay for workers with an accepted physical injury claim to access sessions with a counsellor or psychologist to support their mental health during their recovery.

Find out more: **Adjustment to Injury Counselling**

### For workers with a mental injury

Workers can receive treatment such as sessions with a psychologist or psychiatrist before a mental injury claim is accepted so they can start recovery sooner.

Find out more: **Provisional psychological support**

## Workers' Psychological Support Service

This is a free, confidential and independent callback service where workers can access support from a social worker. Please note, this is not a crisis service.

Find out more: Call **1800 370 732** (during business hours) or visit **wpsc.org.au**

Find more mental health services **on our website**.

**Need urgent help?** If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call Lifeline on **13 11 14**. If life is in immediate danger call **000**.