

# WORKING TO WELL

## EMPLOYER'S QUICK GUIDE TO EARLY AND SAFE RETURN TO WORK



[worksafenb.ca](http://worksafenb.ca)



## Work is good.

This basic fact drives our efforts to support safe and timely return to work of injured workers. Returning to work helps workers stay active and renews a sense of purpose. It also provides financial stability. Working is good for physical and mental health, and, in fact, it often helps speed healing.

Employers also benefit from return-to-work programs as they keep productivity loss to a minimum, keep a skilled and experienced worker, reduce the costs of recruiting new talent and reduce claim costs that, in turn, can reduce assessment premiums.

Making safe and sustainable work arrangements for recovering workers takes teamwork. Workers, employers, and health care providers all have important contributions to make to shift the focus from what a person can't do to what they can do at the workplace.

Employers are integral. They:

- Keep in touch with injured workers throughout the recovery process to show they are valued and connected to the workplace
- Offer meaningful and productive modified duties or other suitable work that is safe and within their capabilities
- Ensure that supervisors and co-workers support injured workers during recovery
- Communicate the return-to-work program to staff
- Communicate and collaborate with all return-to-work partners

To help, WorkSafeNB has developed a set of tools. This kit will help you and your employees stay healthy and safe as well as supported through a return-to-work process. It's all about making it easy for you and your employees to stay informed and connected.

Learn more about [return to work](#) and [working to well](#) online.

# Prompts for Identifying Early and Safe Options

The following prompts may help you find alternative work that is valuable to the organization. Remember, if the worker is unable to perform usual job duties – with or without modifications – then first look for suitable work within the division before looking across the whole organization.

Department or Area within Organization	Questions to Ask	Example Ideas
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What tasks have we not got around to doing?</li> <li>• What are our needs in the next 6-12 months?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processing tax receipts</li> <li>• Data entry</li> <li>• Filing and reorganizing</li> </ul>
Business Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there new systems or processes that would improve business?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop filing system</li> <li>• Forms for improved efficiency</li> <li>• Training manual content</li> <li>• Quality assurance system</li> </ul>
Promotion, Marketing, Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What work could promote the business?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone sales or calling clients</li> <li>• Developing promotional material</li> <li>• Market research – customer satisfaction questionnaires</li> <li>• Updating client database</li> </ul>
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does anyone need an extra hand?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleaning up and organizing</li> <li>• Researching or buying tools and equipment</li> <li>• Inventory</li> <li>• Organizing parts and materials</li> <li>• Finding new suppliers (more cost-efficient or better materials)</li> </ul>
All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can we complete the job in a safer way?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can tools or equipment, such as carts, handles, hoists, power tools and ergonomics reduce the demands?</li> <li>• Can we reorganize job tasks to reduce risks?</li> <li>• Can we adjust the work environment, such as temperature and lighting?</li> </ul>
All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there incomplete tasks?</li> <li>• Are there opportunities for bundling job duties?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incomplete projects</li> <li>• Areas that requires research</li> <li>• Redistribution of job tasks (make sure that you're not putting co-workers at risk of injury)</li> </ul>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there training that the worker could take that would be of benefit to the organization?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer courses</li> <li>• Safety training</li> <li>• Courses on technical skills</li> <li>• Worker train others to perform certain skills</li> <li>• Is there an opportunity for cross-training (other job tasks) in the organization?</li> </ul>



# Guidelines for early and safe options (strain/sprain injuries)

This document provides employers and workers with a list of common physical limitations for soft-tissue injuries. These limitations are guidelines to help develop an appropriate offer of selective/light employment or a return-to-work plan.

<p><b>Low Back</b></p> <p><b>Ensure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The worker can self-pace and/or take micro breaks</li> <li>The worker can change position between walking, standing, and sitting</li> </ul> <p><b>Limit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking on uneven ground</li> <li>Lifting and carrying to light or medium loads, depending on frequency and postures</li> </ul> <p><b>Avoid:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jarring</li> <li>Repetitive bending</li> <li>Long periods of static standing or sitting</li> <li>Extreme bending or extending of the back</li> <li>Twisting of the back</li> </ul>	<p><b>Shoulder</b></p> <p><b>Ensure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The worker can self-pace and/or take micro breaks</li> </ul> <p><b>Limit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climbing ladders</li> <li>Activities using arm above shoulder level, including reaching down</li> <li>Activities which require lifting and carrying to light or medium loads</li> </ul> <p><b>Avoid:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holding the arm outstretched for periods especially while holding weights and applying force</li> <li>Lifting and carrying with arm above shoulder level</li> </ul>	<p><b>Knee</b></p> <p><b>Ensure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The worker can self-pace and/or take micro breaks</li> <li>The worker can occasionally elevate the knee</li> <li>The worker can frequently change position between standing, walking, and sitting</li> </ul> <p><b>Limit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking on uneven ground</li> </ul> <p><b>Avoid:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long periods of standing or walking</li> <li>Deep squatting, kneeling, or crouching (with or without weight)</li> <li>Pivoting of the knee</li> <li>Participating in activities requiring bracing, balancing, running or jumping</li> <li>Stair use or ladder climbing</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ankle</b></p> <p><b>Ensure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The worker can occasionally elevate the ankle</li> <li>The worker can self-pace and/or take micro breaks</li> </ul> <p><b>Limit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The use of stairs</li> </ul> <p><b>Avoid:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long periods of standing or walking</li> <li>Walking on uneven ground</li> <li>Climbing ladders</li> <li>Deep squatting and crouching (with or without weight)</li> <li>Activities requiring balancing, bracing, running or jumping</li> </ul>
<p><b>Elbow/Forearm</b></p> <p><b>Ensure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The worker can self-pace and/or take micro breaks</li> </ul> <p><b>Limit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repetitive or sustained gripping, especially where high forces are required</li> <li>Lifting and carrying to light or medium loads</li> <li>Repetitive elbow bending</li> <li>The total time spent keyboarding or driving</li> <li>The use of impact tools (including power tools and hammers)</li> </ul> <p><b>Avoid:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hanging weights</li> <li>Forearm rotations</li> <li>Pressure on the elbow/forearm</li> </ul>	<p><b>Wrist/Hand</b></p> <p><b>Limit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repetitive gripping, especially where high or sustained forces are needed</li> <li>Lifting and carrying to light or medium loads</li> <li>Repetitive or sustained gripping, especially where high forces are required</li> <li>The use of impact tools (including power tools and hammers)</li> <li>The total time keyboarding or driving</li> </ul> <p><b>Avoid:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extreme postures of the wrist, especially with force</li> </ul>	<p><b>Neck</b></p> <p><b>Ensure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The worker can self-pace and/or take micro breaks</li> </ul> <p><b>Limit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities with arms above shoulder level, including reaching down</li> <li>Activities with lifting and carrying to light or medium loads</li> <li>Hanging weights</li> <li>Ladder climbing</li> </ul>	<p><b>Avoid:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lifting and carrying with arms above shoulder level</li> <li>Extremes or looking up, down or over the shoulder, especially if sustained for more than a few seconds</li> </ul>

## Strength categories for handling loads

- National Occupational Classification (NOC) is the nationally accepted reference on occupations in Canada and provides a standardized framework for definitions such as pulling, pushing, lifting and/or moving objects during the work performed.
- The NOC defines strength used in handling loads (e.g. pulling, pushing, lifting and/or moving objects during the work performed) as follows:
  - Limited:** Work activities involve handling loads up to 5 kg
  - Light:** Work activities involve handling loads of 5 kg but less than 10 kg
  - Medium:** Work activities involve handling loads between 10 and 20 kg
  - Heavy:** Work activities involve handling loads more than 20 kg

# Early and safe return-to-work offer

Employer's name/location: \_\_\_\_\_

Worker's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Claim number: \_\_\_\_\_

We are committed to helping employees make an early and safe return to work. Working is good for physical and mental health, and, in fact, it often helps speed healing.

We are offering the following modified duties:

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*(Describe specific job duties and the physical requirements of each duty and/or attach any functional job description.)*

We are offering the following hours:

Full-time hours     Modified hours (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_ )

We would like help in identifying modified duties.

Employer contact responsible for return-to-work program: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer contact phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please fax completed form to 1 888 629-4722.**

# Seven Principles for Successful Return to Work

Reduce work disability duration and costs in your organization.

<p><b>Principle 1:</b> Workplace has a strong commitment to health and safety, which is demonstrated by behaviours of the workplace parties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions speak louder than words.</li> <li>• Management spends time and money on improving safety and supporting co-ordinated RTW programs.</li> <li>• Workers are involved in decisions affecting their daily work.</li> <li>• Communication is open – people feel free to voice concerns or make suggestions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Principle 2:</b> The employer makes an offer of modified work (also known as work accommodation) to injured workers so they can return early and safely to work activities suitable to their abilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When possible, return a worker to their own work area (environment, people, practices are familiar).</li> <li>• When encountering difficulty in creating an appropriate modified job, consider consulting an occupational therapist or other ergonomic expert.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Principle 3:</b> RTW co-ordinator ensures that the plan supports the returning worker without disadvantaging co-workers and supervisors.</p> <p>RTW plans that anticipate and avoid the following pitfalls will have better outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workers feel like the workplace is unprepared for their return.</li> <li>• Co-workers resent injured worker for having to take over some of his/her work.</li> <li>• Supervisors are expected to ensure the same level of service/production in spite of accommodating an injured worker.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Principle 4:</b> Supervisors are trained in work disability and are included in RTW planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisors are important to success due to their proximity to workers and ability to manage immediate work environment.</li> <li>• Supervisors should be trained in safe work practices and ergonomic practices.</li> <li>• Supervisors should be taught and encouraged to be positive and empathetic in early contacts.</li> <li>• Supervisors should follow-up and problem solve on a regular basis.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Principle 5:</b> Employer makes an early and considerate contact with injured worker.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact should be made within the first week or two, followed by contact after every 10 days of absence.</li> <li>• Ideally, contact is made by supervisor.</li> <li>• This contact should <b>not</b> involve issues such as injury causation or blame. It should express concern for the health and well-being of the worker.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Principle 6:</b> Someone has the responsibility to co-ordinate return to work.</p> <p>The co-ordinator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be trusted and respected by labour and management.</li> <li>• Provides individualized planning adapted to initial and ongoing needs of the worker.</li> <li>• Ensures necessary communication does not break down</li> <li>• Ensures all RTW team members understand what to expect.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Principle 7:</b> Employers and health care providers communicate with each other about the workplace demands as needed and with the worker’s consent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The more the health care providers know about the worker’s job and the workplace’s ability to accommodate, the better able they are to participate in informed RTW decision-making.</li> <li>• Choose a variety of communication methods: written (job demands and options); telephone (work and job demands); and workplace visits by health care providers.</li> </ul>	

– Adapted from Institute for Work and Health’s *Seven ‘Principles’ for Successful Return to Work*.

# Sample Return-to-Work (RTW) Plan

Worker's name:

Pre-accident job position:

Pre-accident supervisor:

Modified work supervisor  
(if different):

Effective date:

Anticipated end  
date:

Job position:

- Pre-accident job – modified duties/hours
- Alternate job with or without modifications
- Re-bundled tasks
- Home position

**Functional limitations and restrictions** (list the restrictions that require accommodation):

**RTW plan specifications** (describe job duties, tasks and modifications including necessary tools, equipment and training):

**Hours** (include progression schedule if applicable):

Work Week (Date)	Days and Hours Scheduled Each Week							Comments
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	

**Monitoring/review** (outline schedule for regular monitoring and review):

Daily informal check-ins with supervisor at \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up review meeting with \_\_\_\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_ (name, date, time, location)

In addition, if you (the worker), the employer or WorkSafeNB has any issues, difficulties or concerns with the modified work contact, please contact:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signatures:**

By signing this document, we confirm our participation in the plan's development, we understand our roles in the plan's implementation and monitoring, and agree to actively participate as outlined above.

Supervisor/manager: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Worker: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Union representative  
(if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



