

ARTHRITIS AND WORK CHECKLISTS

How to deal with arthritis and persistent musculoskeletal disorders in the work place: A guide for employers, employees and health-care providers

These checklists will help make arthritis and persistent musculoskeletal disorders a regular conversation topic between employers, employees and their health-care providers.

Guiding Factors

The checklists are based on these six factors:

1. Anyone living with arthritis can work at nearly any type of job, although sometimes specific adjustments are helpful.
2. Work provides purpose, socialization and potentially greater wellbeing, in addition to an income. This can positively impact individuals, their families, their employers and society as well.
3. According to the United Nations, meaningful employment is a human right. In Canada, about 90% of employees are protected by provincial or territorial employment laws.
4. Maintaining employment, job reinstatement and planning are shared responsibilities between employers and employees, and, where relevant, unions and insurance companies and/or provincial/territorial employee compensation programs.
5. Early clinical interventions that prioritize the importance of work are important to the employee's return to the job.
6. Work is a key aspect of clinical care and approach to treatment.

About the Arthritis and Work Checklists

These checklists were developed through a multidisciplinary approach with the cooperation of various stakeholders. Employee and employer are at the core, but they extend to health-care providers, occupational health/human resources, insurance providers, unions, etc. For ease of use, the checklists for all stakeholders are compiled in one publication. Reflected in the design is the fact that not all employees have access to all involved stakeholders.

Regulations and Employment Law

In Canada work is governed by Federal and Provincial/Territorial laws and regulations.

“What employment rights are protected by employment standards legislation?”

Employment standards legislation covers rights in areas such as hours of work and overtime pay, minimum wage, pay, vacation time and vacation pay, public holidays, coffee and meal breaks, pregnancy leave and parental leave, personal emergency leave, family medical leave, termination notice and termination pay.¹

“Do all employees have the same employment rights?”

No. Some categories of employees may be subject to a variation in the employment standard or excluded from one or more of the laws. For example, farm employees may be paid a piece rate instead of a minimum wage, and in most provinces they are not eligible for overtime or public holiday pay. Other categories of employees that could have different employment rights include commercial fishers, oil field employees, loggers, home care givers, professionals, managers and some categories of salespersons.²

For more on provincial/territorial laws relating to work, contact your labour ministry via www.labour.gc.ca/eng/regulated.shtml.

¹ Government of Canada, Workers Rights in Canada, December 2007; sourced on July 22, 2014 from http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/about/publication/workers_rights.shtml

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CHECKLIST

EMPLOYER

As a manager, you have a strong influence on an employee's ability to work. Start by understanding what type of work your employee can do, as well as how much.

- Work with your employee to establish what can be done to maintain full or partial employment.
- Help your employee determine how medical treatments may affect his or her work.
- With your employee's consent, an occupational health doctor/nurse, human resources, and/or insurance carrier can contact the treating physician about possible consequences of the condition and treatments on your employees ability to work.
- With your employees consent, ask your employee's health-care providers for specific guidance as to his or her ability to work. Consider a three-way conversation with the employee and the health professional to discuss available options to help the situation.
- If your employee cannot continue working at present, establish how to maintain contact and how co-workers will be informed during the employee's sick/disability leave.
- Consider implementing a program for staff that addresses arthritis or other chronic diseases and the impact.



CHECKLIST

WORKPLACE

OCCUPATIONAL

HEALTH

(If the workplace does not have an occupational health specialist, this checklist may be used by the family physician/primary care provider, specialist, Human Resource department and/or the union.)



- Explain to the employee the importance of maintaining employment, the effects of a leave of absence and how you can support both employee and employer during this process.
- If required, direct your client to information on the rights and duties of the employer and employee related to medical leave or disability.
- Discuss the particulars of the employee's job, (both physical and psychological factors), hours on the job and working conditions.
- With the employee, assess any mental or physical strain associated with work and with joint problems. How does the employee deal with work (attitude, motivation, stress resistance) and how do they manage energy levels, time and social activities.
- Encourage the employee to explore with their health-care providers the effects of his or her condition and treatments on work. Does the employee wish for you to contact his/her physician regarding this?
- Explain that he/she may permit the workplace occupational health providers to provide information to their health-care providers.
- Explore options to adapt the employee's work and working environment.
- Reiterate the importance of a healthy lifestyle, including exercise, and how it benefits disease management. Refer patients to programs, information or specialists for added guidance and motivation.
- Advise the employer on the employee's ability to perform job duties. Determine where possible a sustainable balance between his or her abilities and the demands of the job.
- If despite all possible accommodations the condition does not allow the employee to perform required job duties, look for ways to assist the employer and employee in finding suitable work for the employee.

The Arthritis Society has been setting lives in motion for over 70 years. Dedicated to a vision of living well while creating a future without arthritis, The Society is Canada's principal health charity providing education, programs and support to the over 4.6 million Canadians living with arthritis. Since its founding in 1948, The Society has been the largest non-government funder of arthritis research in Canada, investing nearly \$190 million in projects that have led to breakthroughs in the diagnosis, treatment and care of people with arthritis. The Arthritis Society is accredited under Imagine Canada's Standards Program. For more information and to make a donation, visit arthritis.ca.

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