

Work-related Injuries

How Will My Injury Affect My Work?

Physicians have a professional and legal responsibility to provide timely and objective opinions about your ability to remain at, or return to, your work, as requested by your employer, disability insurer, or workers' compensation. Physicians also have a responsibility to protect your health information, and will require your consent to send a medical report, unless required by law.

What Questions Will My Doctor Ask?

The following is a list of questions your physician may ask about your injury, your daily activities, and your work:

1. Your physician will ask you to describe how the injury occurred, and may ask you to demonstrate how you were moving or positioned at the time. Understanding the mechanics of the injury will help your physician diagnose your injury. Other questions may include:

- What date did the injury occur (or when did you first have symptoms)?
- Did the symptoms occur suddenly or gradually?
- Can you demonstrate what you were doing when the injury occurred?

2. Describe for your physician any prior injuries or problems you have had in the same area of your body. A history of past injuries or disorders may make you more prone to injury. Your doctor will want to know:

- Have you had any injuries or problems with this area in the past?
- Were you having any problems with this area just prior to this injury?

3. Your physician will ask about your other activities around the time of the injury. For symptoms that have come on gradually, or suddenly worsen, it is important to consider other activities (both at work and away from work) that may have fatigued or strained the injured region of your body. Your physician may ask:

- Do you recall any other strains at work about the same time?
- Do you recall any other strains away from work about the same time?

4. Describe how the injury interferes with your usual activities at home, as the activities affected can provide additional clues about the type and severity of the injury. Your doctor may ask:

- Are you having difficulty with your daily activities (e.g., bathing or grooming, cleaning activities, lifting or carrying, driving)?

5. Describe how your injury interferes with your usual activities at work. The activities affected can provide additional clues about the type and severity of the injury:

- Were you able to remain at work after the injury?
- What activities did you have difficulty with? Reaching? Lifting or carrying? Operation of controls or equipment?

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6. Your physician also will ask how you are managing your discomfort or other symptoms. Such questions include:

- Are you taking any medications for your injury?
- Are you using ice, heat or skin rubs?
- Are you stretching or using massage?
- Does movement or exercise help?

7. Lastly, your physician will ask about your usual job demands, and whether your employer has a modified (or transitional) work program. The following are some questions that may be asked:

- What are the heaviest objects you lift, carry, push, or pull?

- What reaching is required in you work (forwards, sideways, overhead)?
- How much do you sit, stand, or walk?
- What surfaces do you work on: floors, stairs, ladders, outdoors?
- What are the most repetitive or awkward movements in your work?
- What tools, equipment, or vehicles do you operate?

In some cases, your physician may ask your permission to contact your employer for additional information about your job demands, and what job modifications may be available.

Other Instructions

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