

Sick Note to Fit Note

The statement of Fitness for Work, or 'Fit Note', is a new Medical Statement that General Practitioners (GPs) will issue from 6th April 2010, it will replace the current 'sick note'.

The changes are not about trying to return employees to work before they are ready, but to advise whether employees are unfit or fit for work. The intention is for GPs to provide simple, clear and practical advice about a person's fitness for work rather than simply advising them to refrain from work.

However, the Fit Note does not replace an Occupational Health assessment of an employee's fitness for work and should not prevent Managers referring employees to Occupational Health as per the organisation's attendance policy.

Occupational Health advises the organisation on fitness for work issues which can include any of the following:

- A phased return to work . may include a gradual increase in the intensity of your work duties or working hours.
- Altered hours . may include a change to the hours that you work, which does not necessarily mean working fewer hours.
- Amended duties . may include amending your duties to take into account your condition.
- Workplace adaptations . may include adapting your work place to take into account your condition.

Most organisations will advise employees to self certificate for the first seven days of sickness absence and then require a GP fit note, which can recommend one of the four options.

An Occupational Health assessment can also be undertaken and can help advise employers as Occupational Health can liaise directly with management to discuss reasonable adjustments and adaptations. This is one advantage of an Occupational Health assessment, the other is that an Occupational Health assessment is an independent assessment rather than an advocate of one party.

NO FEAR!

4-10 April 2010 sees Mental Health Action Week this year tackle the emotions we all face from time to time: fear and anxiety.

If you play competitive sport, have a demanding job, or are facing a major event in your personal life, then the body's reaction to your perception of the circumstances will be a natural mechanism to keep you alert and ready. You may have a dry mouth, your pulse rate will quicken and your muscles become tense.

This is perfectly normal, but when this anxiety becomes too much and prevents you performing at your best or, even worse, stops you dealing with daily living activities such as going out, meeting people, and functioning normally, then the anxiety you are experiencing has become overwhelming and needs to be addressed.

For some people, their anxieties may have no apparent cause. For others, there may be causes relating to similar previous life events whether in the recent past or further back when they were growing up.

What it is important to remember is that there are ways that we can tackle our fears and anxieties. Whilst it is better to recognise signs and symptoms before they arise, and many of us know when we are anxious, remember that even if you have lived with your anxiety for many years help is available.

Playing sport or exercising regularly is a natural way to stimulate those chemicals in the brain that help with combating anxiety, as well as being physically beneficial in reducing blood pressure, increasing aerobic capacity and strengthening heart muscles.

But there are other ways to deal with our fears and anxieties. Perhaps you are interested in faith matters, or maybe you would like to meet similar people who have gone through experiences similar to yours. Relaxation, yoga or meditation groups meet in many local communities and are good ways of dealing with your concerns, as well as for meeting new and interesting friends.

If you do not feel comfortable in groups or if your anxiety is stopping you living your life normally, then you may be someone who would benefit from talking to a professional counsellor or therapist who is trained in helping people to deal with their own situations. Your GP or Practice Nurse will have information on local practitioners and the internet has links to self-help booklets and other resources.

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Performance Through Health



HEALTH AWARENESS DATES FOR THE DIARY

April 1-30	Irritable Bowel Syndrome Awareness Month http://www.aboutibs.org/site/about-ibs/april-ibs-awareness-month	May 10-14	Cancer Prevention Week http://www.wcrf-uk.org/
1-30	Bowel Cancer Awareness Month http://www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk/	11	Stroke Awareness Day http://www.stroke.org.uk/
4-10	Mental Health Action Week http://www.mhf.org.uk/campaigns/mhaw/	14	Fruity Friday http://www.wcrf-uk.org/
12-18	Orchid Male Cancer Awareness Week http://www.orchid-cancer.org.uk/Home	17-23	Cystic Fibrosis Week http://www.cftrust.org.uk/
19-25	Parkinson's Awareness Week http://www.parkinsons.org.uk/	19	World Hepatitis Day http://www.hepctrust.org.uk/
19-25	Depression Awareness Week http://www.depressionalliance.org/	June 1-5	National Thrombosis Week http://www.thrombosis-charity.org.uk/cms/index.php
19-24	National Stop Snoring Week http://www.britishsnoring.co.uk/	1-30	Everyman Male Cancer Awareness Month http://www.everyman-campaign.org/index.html
26 April – 2 May	MS Awareness Week http://www.mstrust.org.uk/msawareness/	1-30	National Osteoporosis Month http://www.nos.org.uk/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=183
May 1-9	Asthma Awareness Week http://www.asthma.org.uk/	7-13	Cervical Screening Awareness Week http://www.jotrust.co.uk/
3-9	Sun Awareness Week http://www.bad.org.uk/	13-19	National Epilepsy Week http://www.epilepsy.org.uk/
4	World Asthma Day http://www.asthma.org.uk/	13-20	Diabetes Week http://www.diabetes.org.uk/
9-16	M.E. Awareness Week http://www.afme.org.uk/	21-28	UK Myeloma Awareness Week http://www.myeloma.org.uk/
10-14	National Allergy Week http://www.allergyuk.org/	21-27	Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Awareness Week http://www.mndassociation.org/

Cervical Screening Awareness Week 7-13 June

Women should have a cervical smear at least every three years. Having a smear test regularly can save your life as early detection and treatment of cervical cell abnormalities has proven to be very successful in preventing the development of cervical cancer (www.jotrust.co.uk).

If it has been three years (or more) since your last smear test - don't delay make an appointment at your GP surgery today.

PTH News

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome and introduce our new OH Adviser, Vicky Strang.

Based in our Southern office, Vicky has quickly become a valued team member. She has extensive Occupational Health experience and will be working with a number of our clients.

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