

Talking To Your Doctor

You know more about your job, your work practices, and your symptoms than anyone else. What should you tell your medical practitioner to help sort out the information that you need to provide to your employer?

Talk about your symptoms

- How you feel
- When your problem started
- When you got your symptoms
- Do you have your symptoms only at work?
After work?
- Are the symptoms worse at the beginning of the week or at the end of the work week?
- Does it make any difference what time of day it is? What day of the week it is?
- Does the problem go away when you are on holidays?
- Do you notice the symptoms only when doing certain tasks at home?
- Did your symptoms start after changing a work procedure or work area?
- After using different equipment?
- Whether or not your health problem caused you to miss time from work
- Do any co-workers have the same symptoms?

Give information about your job

- Where you work
- What your employer makes or does
- What your regular job duties are
- When you started your present job
- What hours you work
- What days you work
- Provide a job spec if you have one

What hazards you may be exposed to

- Anything in your work that could be harmful to your health (dust, heat, noise, stress, conflict, etc.)
- What supplies and equipment you work with
- Are there any hazards that have been brought to the attention of the Joint Health and Safety Committee?

- What protective equipment you use – do you wear a mask, gloves, lab coat, coveralls, or other protection if necessary?
- Do you eat in your work area?
- Exposures you might have outside work – your personal habits – do you smoke, take drugs/medications or consume alcohol?
- What are your eating habits?
- Do you exercise?
- Do you work a second job, volunteer?
- What are your hobbies?

Information you should have on your doctor's note to the employer

- Your name – the patient
- The doctor's name, address and phone number
- The date of the medical examination
- Whether you were examined in person by the health care professional
- The date when you can return to work
- Specific restrictions which indicate the doctor's knowledge of your job requirements
- How long (as specifically as possible) the restrictions will apply. Are the restrictions permanent?
- Are your absences likely to be sporadic? Will there be flare-ups due to your condition?
- When, if at all, you will be able to return to regular duties

Remember:

The employer is NOT entitled to a diagnosis. They are entitled to a prognosis along with duration and specifics about your medical restrictions as they relate to your job.

The employer is also not entitled to know what medications you are on – they are only entitled to know if the medication causes a restriction, e.g. causes drowsiness.