



Scan this QR code
with your phone
camera for a digital
copy of this handout.

Returning to Work After Treatment

How to prepare and what to expect

As you approach the end of your treatment, you might be thinking about your job.

Cancer diagnosis and treatment can affect every part of your life, including employment. You may have stopped working during treatment. The decision to return to work depends on different things, including the type of work you do, your financial situation, your abilities, and the long-term side effects of your treatment.

This document explores different topics to think about and discuss with your doctor.

Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Team

- Has my healthcare team medically cleared me to return to work?
- What is the recommended schedule for a gradual return to work?
- What are the possible long-term side effects of my treatment?

Know Your Legal Rights

There are laws that protect you from discrimination. You do not have to share your medical history with employers. Your cancer diagnosis cannot be used against you in the workplace. Learning your legal rights may help you feel less anxious about going back to work.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA is a federal law. This law protects workers with a disability if they can do their job with *reasonable accommodations*. Examples of accommodations are changing your work schedule or adding ramps to the workplace. The ADA must be followed by employers with 15 or more employees. To learn more, visit www.ada.gov.

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

FMLA allows you to take up to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave in a 12-month period. During FMLA leave, your job and benefits are protected. FMLA gives you time to take care of a spouse, parent, or minor child with a serious health condition, or to take personal medical leave. This law only applies when:

- An employer has 50 or more people employed within 75 miles.
- An employee has worked for at least 1,250 hours during the past year.

There are other available benefits, such as Employer Sponsored Insurance. For more information, talk with your employer or visit www.dol.gov/whd/fmla.

Paid Family and Medical Leave Act (PFMLA)

Eligible Washington employees can take up to 12 weeks of paid time off through PFMLA.

- To take PFMLA, an employee must have worked at least 820 hours in Washington during their qualifying period.
- All work hours in Washington count towards your eligibility.

PFMLA can be taken for personal medical leave or to care for a spouse, parent, or minor child with a serious health condition. For more information, visit www.paidleave.wa.gov.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

If you believe your employment rights have been violated due to your disability, you can file a complaint with the EEOC. You usually have 180 days from the day the discrimination happened to file a complaint. There are some exceptions, and your time limit could be as few as 45 days or as many as 300 days.

For more information:

- Call the EEOC Seattle Field Office at 1-800-669-4000
- Visit: www.eeoc.gov/how-file-charge-employment-discrimination

Take your time to adjust to life after treatment, whether you are going back to work or looking for a new job. Be kind to yourself as you create new routines. It is okay to ask for help whenever you need it. Going back to work after cancer treatment can be challenging but is also an important step in the recovery process.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- Has my cancer diagnosis changed the type of job I want?
- Can I handle a full-time job, or should I start with a part-time job?
- How much information do I want to share with my supervisor and coworkers?
- How will the side effects of treatment affect my job?

- What kind of work accommodations will help me? Examples of accommodations include:
 - A flexible work schedule
 - Working from home
 - Frequent breaks
 - Time off for medical appointments
 - Reassigning job tasks

You can find more accommodation ideas here: askjan.org/disabilities/Cancer.cfm

Communicate with Your Employer

Once you have decided to return to work, there are some things you can do to make your transition easier.

- Schedule a meeting with your supervisor to discuss possible work accommodations.
- Discuss your abilities and limitations.
- Set up regular meetings with your supervisor. Plan to talk about your accommodations and whether they need to be changed.
- Get written documentation of approved accommodations and a return-to-work plan. Your human resources representative or supervisor can help you with this.

Find a New Job

You are not legally required to share your cancer history during a job interview. The interviewer does not have the right to ask you about your medical history.

If you are concerned about the gaps in your work history, you can write a skills-based resume. This type of resume describes your achievements instead of dates of employment.

Questions to ask before you look for a new job:

- Have my career goals changed after cancer diagnosis? What are my new career goals?
- What skills do I currently have? What kind of new skills do I need to learn before applying for a new job?

- What are my financial responsibilities?
- What health insurance plans do different employers offer?

You can find more information here:

- 3 Tips for Finding a New Job After Cancer | Cancer.Net
- Job-Hunting After Cancer Treatment | Cancer and Careers

Resources

Cancer and Careers: This organization empowers and educates people with cancer. They provide expert advice, an interactive tool, and educational events. Visit: www.cancerandcareers.org

Job Accommodation Network (JAN): JAN offers free individual guidance on the ADA. They can help with accommodation solutions that support employers and individuals with health conditions and disabilities. Visit: askjan.org or call 1-800-526-7234

Social Security's Ticket to Work: This free program offers employment services. They help people return to work and provide career counseling, job placement, and training. They help Social Security disability beneficiaries achieve their career goals while allowing them to continue to receive disability benefits during the Trial Work Period (TWP). You can call them at 1-866-968-7842. To learn more about Ticket to Work, visit: choosework.ssa.gov/about

Triage Cancer: This organization offers resources, materials, and events for people with cancer. They can help you navigate healthcare, insurance, employment, and finances. Visit: www.triagecancer.org

UWMC Rehab Counseling: Rehab counselors help you adapt to changes caused by your diagnosis. They can help you plan your return to work, school, and other activities. Please ask your provider for a referral.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Please contact your primary care provider who can help answer your questions or concerns.