

Statement of Fitness for Work

This guide explains what you should do when your doctor gives you a fit note.



Statement of Fitness for Work

The Statement of Fitness for Work is the form which your doctor will give you when your health affects your ability to work.

The fit note allows your doctor to advise you on how you may be able to return to work. Work can be an important part of your recovery.

The Statement of Fitness for Work allows your Doctor to advise you of one of two options:

- you are not fit for work and that you should refrain from work for a stated period of time.
- You may be fit for work taking account of certain advice such as:
 - a phased return to work;
 - altered hours;
 - amended duties; and/or
 - workplace adaptations.

Your Doctors may decide that your health condition does not necessarily mean they cannot return to work; however you may not be able to complete all of your normal duties or hours, or you may need some support to help you to undertake your normal duties.

What type of advice should be included on the Statement?

When advising patients that they 'may be fit for work', the advice in the comments box should describe the limitation(s) that the person may have.

For example, the Doctor might advise that a person with lower back pain "cannot sit for long periods of time" rather than "should be provided with a better chair" or that a person with travel related anxiety might benefit from "avoiding travel in peak hours" rather than "should work between 10am and 4pm".

Does the employer have to follow the advice on the statement?

What the Doctor completes on the Statement is advice to you and is not binding on your employer. The purpose of the advice is to help you and your employer explore ways of facilitating a return to work. In some cases this may not be possible.

Frequently asked questions

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What should I do if my fit note says I am 'not fit for work'?

Give or send the form to your employer. The fit note provides evidence that you cannot work because of your health condition. Your employer will use this to arrange your sick pay. If you are self-employed or unemployed you can use the form to support a claim for benefits.

What should I do if my fit note says I 'may be fit for work'?

Your doctor will advise you that you 'may be fit for work' if they believe you may be able to return to work with some help from your employer. You should discuss this advice with your employer to see if you can return to work, taking into account the effects of your illness or injury. If it is possible for you to return to work you should agree how this will happen, what support you will receive and how long the support will last. If you and your employer agree it is not possible for you to return to work until you have recovered further, you do not need to return to your doctor for a new fit note. If you are self-employed or unemployed you can still use the form to make a claim for benefits if the doctor has advised that you 'may be fit for work'.

Do I need to see my doctor again before I go back to work?

Your doctor will say on the form if they need to see you again. So, unless requested, you do not need to see your doctor again before you go back to work.

When can I return to work?

You should return to work as soon as you feel well enough to do so and with the agreement of your employer. This might be before your fit note runs out. However, if your doctor has advised you that it would be unsafe or bad for your health to return to work you should take this advice seriously. For some jobs there are separate processes to ensure it is safe for you to return to your job. Your employer will advise you if this is the case.

How does this affect benefits?

The way you apply for benefit has not changed. If your doctor has recommended that you 'may be fit for work' you can still apply for benefit. Information on how to make a claim to benefit is on the back of your fit note.

How does this affect Statutory Sick Pay?

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The arrangements for Statutory Sick Pay have not changed. If a doctor recommends that you may be fit for work, but you and your employer agree that you should remain off work you can still receive Statutory Sick Pay.

If you are in doubt about your rights to Statutory Sick Pay, you can seek advice from your trade union or an advice centre. You can find detailed information about Statutory Sick Pay online at www.nidirect.gov.uk

This leaflet is only a guide and does not cover every circumstance. We have done our best to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct as of April 2013. It is possible that some of the information is oversimplified, or may become inaccurate over time, for example because of changes to the law. This report can be accessed online at: