Work is important on many levels and may provide meaning and focus for our lives. Work-related issues may include job dissatisfaction, workplace injury, stress, discrimination and bullying, violence, accidental death, retirement, retrenchment and unemployment. Common causes of work-related stress include long hours, heavy workload, job insecurity and conflicts with co-workers or bosses. The stress of dealing with changing work circumstances that are out of your control can increase the risk of health problems such as anxiety and depression.

Work is important to most of us on many levels. Doing a job we enjoy and find satisfying can provide a meaningful focus for our lives, as well as bringing in an income. Our standard of living hinges on the money we make, while employment often contributes to our self-image and self-esteem.

Work-related problems can affect our physical, emotional and mental health. Common issues include job dissatisfaction, workplace injury, stress, discrimination and bullying, violence, accidental death and retirement. Job loss, retrenchment or unexpected loss of income can also cause distress and hardship.

What to do about job dissatisfaction

Not everyone has the opportunity to work in a rewarding and challenging job. Some people experience job dissatisfaction because they are unhappy or unsafe at work. Previous choices or life circumstances can limit a person’s ability to change their employment.

People who are unhappy in their jobs may have problems such as:

- Conflict with bosses or workmates
- Bullying, discrimination or harassment
- Boredom
- Overwork, stress or safety issues
- No promotion prospects
- Poor pay.

Dealing with stress at work

The cost of workers compensation claims for stress-related conditions in Australia is very high. Common causes of work-related stress include long hours, heavy workload, job insecurity and conflicts with co-workers or bosses. On a strictly business level, workplace conflict leads to downturns in productivity and increases in absenteeism. It is in an organisation’s best interests to ensure that employees are happy at work.

Paying attention to your ‘work–life balance’ can help you manage work-related stress. Burnout can occur when a person strives too hard in one area of life while neglecting everything else. ‘Workaholics’, for example, put all their energies into their career, which can put their family life, social life and personal interests out of balance.

Discrimination at work

Unlawful discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person or group because of characteristics such as:

- Race, colour, national or ethnic origin
- Sex
- Age
- Disability
- Pregnancy status
- Marital status
- Religion
- Sexual preference
- Trade union activity.

Workplace discrimination can occur when:

- Recruiting and selecting staff
- Offering terms, conditions and benefits of employment
- Deciding who receives training and what sort of training is offered
- Selecting staff for transfer, promotion, retrenchment or dismissal.

Workplace violence and bullying

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
Workplace violence is conflict escalated to the point of physical, emotional or psychological attack. It includes threats, insults, racial abuse, sexual harassment or physical contact such as pushing or punching. The attack may come from anybody in the workplace, including an employer, co-worker, customer or service user.

Bullying is a form of violence that can occur in the workplace. Bullying includes any behaviour that intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates another person.

**Dangerous workplaces**

Some workplaces pose a greater health threat than others. For example:

- **Shift work** – a person working the night shift is at greater risk of a range of disorders, accidents and other effects. These may include obesity, cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal problems, transport accidents, work-related accidents, family problems and divorce.
- **Certain occupations** – jobs in forestry, fishing, mining, transport and storage, agriculture and construction are the most dangerous in Australia.
- **Hazardous work practices** – any workplace that doesn’t promote and enforce safe work practices is dangerous, regardless of the industry. Examples of hazardous work practices include not wearing personal safety equipment or failing to use proper manual handling techniques.

**Workplace injuries: selected statistics**

General information on workplace injuries from the Australian Bureau of Statistics includes:

- About six Australians in every 100 experience a work-related injury every year.
- About half of all work-related injuries require time off work.
- People who work in jobs that require physical labour are at higher risk of injury.
- "White collar" jobs (such as working in business, science or education) offer the lowest risk of injury.
- The most common health issues for office workers include musculoskeletal injuries such as repetitive strain injury (RSI).
- The rate of injury is highest in younger workers. Contributing factors may include job inexperience, lack of adequate training, and a tendency to work in jobs that present an increased risk of injury, such as retail.
- The highest injury rate by age group is among men aged 20–24 years, with about 10 injured per 100 employed men. By comparison, the injury rate among women of the same age is half that.
- The industries with the highest risk of injury for female workers include accommodation, cafes and restaurants.
- The industries with the highest risk of injury for male workers include agriculture, forestry and fishing.

**Workplace injuries**

Workplace injuries may occur as a result of:

- Overuse or poor handling techniques
- Moving objects
- Noise or air pollution
- Vehicle accidents
- Tool or machine failure or misuse
- Falls
- Electrocution
- Drowning
- Accidents with dangerous goods or hazardous substances – for example, a liquid splash
- Suffocation or asphyxia
- Infction
- Violence.

**Accidental deaths in the workplace**

In 2007–08, work-related injury caused the death of 150 Australians, with men accounting for 137 of those fatalities. About 80 per cent of those fatalities occurred in four industries:

- Construction
- Transport and storage
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Manufacturing.

Generally speaking, the most common causes of work-related fatal injury include:

- Vehicle accidents (account for about four workplace deaths in every 10)
- Falling objects
- Moving objects
- Falls
- Becoming trapped in moving machinery.

**Retirement**

Responses to retirement depend on the reason for leaving the workforce. For example, a person who planned for their retirement is more likely to feel positive about it, while a person forced into early retirement due to redundancy or illness may find it harder to cope.
Retrenchment or unemployment

Job loss, retrenchment and unexpected unemployment can cause hardship and distress that may lead to health problems. It is normal to experience a range of reactions, which may include shock, anger, guilt and a sense of powerlessness. Over time, the build-up of financial pressures, feelings of failure or being undervalued, and the emotional exhaustion of prolonged job hunting can lead to stress, anxiety, depression and fatigue.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Career counsellor or psychologist
- Your manager
- Human resources manager at your workplace
- Occupational Health and Safety Officer in your workplace
- Your union
- Accountant or financial planner
- WorkCover Advisory Service Tel. 1800 136 089
- Industrial Deaths Support & Advocacy Inc. (IDSA) Tel. (03) 9654 3353
- Worksafe Victoria Tel. 1800 136 089 or (03) 9641 1444 (for referral only)
- Victorian Trades Hall Council (OH&S Unit) Tel. (03) 9659 3511
- The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement Tel. (03) 9265 2111 or 1800 642 066
- Job Watch Tel. (03) 9662 1933 or 1800 331 617
- ACTU Workers’ Lime Tel. 1300 362 223
- Centrelink Employment Services Line Tel. 13 2850
- Seniors’ Information Victoria Tel. 1300 135 090
- Department of Jobs and Small Business, Tel.1300 488 064.

References

3/4 Questions

What are you here to do?  Looking for information on  

Did you find what you were looking for?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Next Submit Now Cancel

Send us your feedback

- Rate this website
- Your comments
- Questions
- Your details

4/4 Your details

Postcode  
Email Address  
Submit Now Cancel

Send us your feedback

Thank you. Your feedback has been successfully sent.

More information

Work

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- Work health basics
- Health risks and the workplace
- Healthy eating and work
- Active living and work
- Healthy mind
- Change and career planning
- Relationships and conflict
- Flexible workplaces
- Environmental health and safety
- Injuries and rehabilitation

Work health basics

- Work and your health
  Work can provide satisfaction, but loss of a job or work-related problems can affect our physical, emotional and mental health.
- Workplace conflict
  A clash of personalities at work is bad for business, because it can affect productivity and increase absenteeism.
- Look after your health at harvest time (slideshow)
  Farmer health, wellbeing and safety are often neglected when facing the pressures of harvest. Simple safety measures can dramatically reduce the risk of injury and illness.
- Computer-related injuries
  Using a computer can contribute to problems of the muscles and joints, eyestrain and overuse injuries of the arms, wrists and hands.
- Physical activity - how to get active when you are busy
  Even if you’re busy, you still need to find a way to be physically active.
- Returning to work after major trauma (video)
If illness or injury forces you to take time off from work, it can have a big impact on your life. The time it takes to recover full health can change the way you feel about yourself. You can lose...

- The dangers of sitting: why sitting is the new smoking
  The less sitting or lying down you do during the day, the better your chances for living a healthy life...
- Workplace safety - coping with a critical incident
  Stress responses can develop over time after trauma, and support may be required by some workers or groups...
- Workplace safety - overuse injuries
  Occupational overuse syndrome, also known as RSI, is caused by repetitive movements or awkward postures...

Health risks and the workplace

- Workplace safety - manual handling injuries
  A person can be injured when handling objects in a variety of ways including pulling, pushing, holding or restraining...
- Workplace safety - overuse injuries
  Occupational overuse syndrome, also known as RSI, is caused by repetitive movements or awkward postures...
- Workplace safety - noise pollution
  There are many ways to reduce exposure to excessive noise in the workplace...
- Workplace safety - hazardous substances
  A hazardous substance can be inhaled, splashed onto the skin or eyes, or swallowed...
- Asthma and your workplace
  Some industries are more likely to affect a person with asthma because of the triggers in the environment...
- Handwashing - why it's important
  Washing your hands with soap and warm water can help prevent the spread of infectious diseases...
- Look after your health at harvest time (slideshow)
  Farmer health, wellbeing and safety are often neglected when facing the pressures of harvest. Simple safety measures can dramatically reduce the risk of injury and illness...
- Returning to work after major trauma (video)
  If illness or injury forces you to take time off from work, it can have a big impact on your life. The time it takes to recover full health can change the way you feel about yourself. You can lose...
- Shiftwork
  A person working the night shift is at greater risk of various disorders and accidents...
- Workplace safety - coping with a critical incident
  Stress responses can develop over time after trauma, and support may be required by some workers or groups...

Healthy eating and work

- Cooking tips for busy people
  If you lack the time or motivation to cook, try these tips...
- Lunch boxes - healthy ideas
  Healthy foods that are great for school lunch boxes...
- Lunch - avoid the fast food fix (video)
  Nutritionist Shane Bilsborough shows us how much energy it takes to burn off a fast food lunch. Join tradies, Corky and Danny as they find out how to maintain a healthy weight...
- Lunch boxes - healthy shopping ideas (video)
  Victorian State Public Health Nutritionist Veronica Graham takes us shopping for the right foods to include in your child's lunchbox...
- Look after your health at harvest time (slideshow)
  Farmer health, wellbeing and safety are often neglected when facing the pressures of harvest. Simple safety measures can dramatically reduce the risk of injury...
and illness...

- Lunch boxes - how to make them healthy (video)
  Victorian State Public Health Nutritionist Veronica Graham shares three healthy and delicious lunchbox examples for the kids and provides some great food preparation tips to save you time throughout...

- Tips to keep our snacks on track (slideshow)
  Most of us are prone to the odd snack or two. Check out these simple tips to keep your snacks on track...

- Workplace catering (video)

Active living and work

- Exercise and stretching in the office (video)
  Sitting behind a desk all day doesn't mean you can't exercise...

- Posture
  Bad habits such as slouching and inactivity cause muscle fatigue and tension that ultimately lead to poor posture...

- The dangers of sitting - why sitting is the new smoking
  The less sitting or lying down you do during the day, the better your chances for living a healthy life...

- Physical activity - staying motivated
  Pick an exercise or fitness activity that appeals to you and suits your lifestyle...

- Returning to work after major trauma (video)
  If illness or injury forces you to take time off from work, it can have a big impact on your life. The time it takes to recover full health can change the way you feel about yourself. You can lose...

Healthy mind

- Exercise and mental health
  We all know how important exercise is for keeping us physically healthy. But did you know that exercise can also help keep you mentally healthy? Research shows that people who exercise regularly have...

- Work-related stress
  Work-related stress causes an increase in sick days and absenteeism, a higher turnover of staff and a drop in productivity...

- Stigma, discrimination and mental illness
  Stigma is when someone sees you in a negative way because of a particular characteristic or attribute, such as mental illness. When someone treats you in a negative way because of your mental illness...

- Getting help for someone with a mental illness
  The sooner a person with a mental illness receives treatment, the better the outcome is likely to be...

- Look after your health at harvest time (slideshow)
  Farmer health, wellbeing and safety are often neglected when facing the pressures of harvest. Simple safety measures can dramatically reduce the risk of injury and illness...

Change and career planning

- Career management
  Some people are unable to effectively manage their careers because previous choices have left them few options...

- Retrenchment or financial loss
  It is normal to feel shocked, distressed, angry, guilty, worthless or powerless when you lose your job or face an unexpected change in your financial situation...

- Job hunting tips
  You can improve your chances of finding a job by casting a wide net...

- Retirement
  People who plan an active life when they retire tend to be happier than those who have no plans...

Relationships and conflict

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
• Workplace conflict
  A clash of personalities at work is bad for business, because it can affect productivity and increase absenteeism.

• Bullying
  Parents can help with bullying by supporting their child and involving the authorities to find solutions.

• Returning to work after major trauma
  Getting back to work can be good for your health and wellbeing so start planning a return to work with your employer and WorkSafe Victoria.

• Work-related stress
  Work-related stress causes an increase in sick days and absenteeism, a higher turnover of staff and a drop in productivity.

• Retrenchment or financial loss
  It is normal to feel shocked, distressed, angry, guilty, worthless or powerless when you lose your job or face an unexpected change in your financial situation.

Flexible workplaces

• Breastfeeding and work
  You can successfully combine breastfeeding with work if you have support from your employer, colleagues and family.

• Hearing loss - communication in the workplace
  If you are unsure how to best communicate with a colleague who has a hearing impairment, ask them.

Environmental health and safety

• 10 tips for work safety
  Take regular work breaks... 10 tips for work safety.

• Asbestos and your health
  When asbestos fibres become airborne, people working with asbestos may inhale particles which remain in their lungs.

• Cadmium
  Low-level exposure to cadmium over a long period of time may cause health effects because cadmium can accumulate in the body.

• Eye safety at work
  Wearing eye protection appropriate for the task can significantly reduce the risk of injury.

• Look after your health at harvest time (slideshow)
  Farmer health, wellbeing and safety are often neglected when facing the pressures of harvest. Simple safety measures can dramatically reduce the risk of injury and illness.

• Q fever
  Q fever is caused by a micro-organism that can be carried by cattle, sheep and goats.

• Returning to work after major trauma (video)
  If illness or injury forces you to take time off from work, it can have a big impact on your life. The time it takes to recover full health can change the way you feel about yourself. You can lose...

• Shiftwork
  A person working the night shift is at greater risk of various disorders and accidents.

• Skin cancer - protecting outdoor workers
  People who work outdoors are in one of the highest risk groups for skin cancer.

• Workplace conflict
  A clash of personalities at work is bad for business, because it can affect productivity and increase absenteeism.

Injuries and rehabilitation

• Computer-related injuries
  Using a computer can contribute to problems of the muscles and joints, eyestrain and overuse injuries of the arms, wrists and hands.

• Financial support after a workplace trauma
Workers compensation insurance covers medical expenses of workers injured at work.

- Look after your health at harvest time (slideshow)
  Farmer health, wellbeing and safety are often neglected when facing the pressures of harvest. Simple safety measures can dramatically reduce the risk of injury and illness.

- Returning to work after major trauma
  Getting back to work can be good for your health and wellbeing so start planning a return to work with your employer and WorkSafe Victoria.

- Returning to work after major trauma (video)
  If illness or injury forces you to take time off from work, it can have a big impact on your life. The time it takes to recover full health can change the way you feel about yourself. You can lose...

- Workplace safety - coping with a critical incident
  Stress responses can develop over time after trauma, and support may be required by some workers or groups.

- Workplace safety - manual handling injuries
  A person can be injured when handling objects in a variety of ways including pulling, pushing, holding or restraining.

- Workplace safety - overuse injuries
  Occupational overuse syndrome, also known as RSI, is caused by repetitive movements or awkward postures.

- Work-related fatalities
  In 2013, 196 people lost their lives due to work-related accidents in Australia. Find out more about your industry and which organisations help to prevent work-related deaths in your workplace.

Related Information

- The dangers of sitting: why sitting is the new smoking
  The less sitting or lying down you do during the day, the better your chances for living a healthy life...

- Computer-related injuries
  Using a computer can contribute to problems of the muscles and joints, eyestrain and overuse injuries of the arms, wrists and hands.

- Workplace conflict
  A clash of personalities at work is bad for business, because it can affect productivity and increase absenteeism.

- Career management
  Some people are unable to effectively manage their careers because previous choices have left them few options.

- Retirement
  People who plan an active life when they retire tend to be happier than those who have no plans.

Related information on other websites

- Australian Government
- MoneyHelp
- Safe Work Australia

Content Partner

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: Better Health Channel - (need new cp)

betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Last updated: October 2012

Page content currently being reviewed.

Content on this website is provided for information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not in any way endorse or support such therapy, service, product or treatment and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. The information and materials
NURSE-ON-CALL

Provides immediate, expert health advice from a registered nurse. Call 1300 60 60 24

Recent Activity

15 people have watched a video today

- **Health topics**
  - Conditions and treatments
  - Healthy living
  - Services and support

- **Explore**
  - Recipes
  - Healthy pantry
  - Videos
  - Consumer medicine information
  - Multilingual health information - Health Translations Directory

- **About**
  - About us
  - Accessibility
  - Content partners
  - Privacy
  - Terms of use
  - Contact us

- **Connect with us**
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - YouTube

betterhealth.vic.gov.au