Returning to work after major trauma

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Summary

- Getting back to work can be good for your health and wellbeing.
- Start your plan to return to work as early as possible.
- An occupational rehabilitation provider can help you with the return to work process.
- Cooperate in the return to work process to meet your legal obligations.
- If you need help, contact your employer, Return to Work Coordinator, WorkSafe Agent or the WorkSafe Advisory Service.

As you recover from a major trauma event you may start thinking about getting back to work. Work provides both financial and social support and can help your recovery.

You do not have to be fully recovered to get back to work - returning to work can be part of your recovery.

You may need to return to work gradually, work shorter hours or do different duties. A GP or healthcare worker will need to assess what you can and can’t do to safely return to work.

WorkSafe Victoria

WorkSafe Victoria is a government organisation that helps injured workers get back into the workforce and provides compensation following a work-related injury or illness. It also provides WorkCover insurance for employers and enforces Victoria’s occupational health and safety laws.

Worksafe Victoria provides information for workers who are planning to return to work, along with information on your return to work obligations.

Returning to work after traumatic injury

Getting back to work after an injury can be good for your health and wellbeing, so the earlier you start planning to return to work, the better.

Your return-to-work obligations

Aside from the benefits to your health and wellbeing, you also have legal obligations to do what you can to return to work. These are:

- Make reasonable efforts to return to work in suitable or pre-injury employment.
- Make reasonable efforts to actively participate and cooperate in planning for your return to work.
- Actively use an occupational rehabilitation service if provided, and cooperate with the provider of that service.
- Actively participate and cooperate in assessments of your capacity for work, rehabilitation progress or future employment prospects.
- Actively participate and cooperate with the WorkSafe Agent in an interview to enhance your opportunities to return to work.

If you don’t meet these obligations, it can affect your weekly payments (income entitlements).

Contact your WorkSafe Agent

Your employer will have a WorkSafe Agent. The Agent will be your contact for making a claim and for your subsequent return to work.

You may be assisted through the return to work process by an occupational rehabilitation provider. Occupational rehab providers are approved by your WorkSafe Agent, and you will be able to choose from a list of three providers.
Discuss your return to work with your treating health practitioner

Ask your treating health practitioner to fill out a WorkSafe Certificate of Capacity with you. This will include details about your injury, your capacity for work, and what aspects of your usual role you can do. A Certificate of Capacity provides your employers with the information they need to appropriately and safely plan your return to work.

Discuss your return to work with your employer

Talk to your employer about your progress and the parts of your job you think you can do. If you haven't heard from your employer, you may consider giving them a call.

Your employer will assign you a Return to Work Coordinator. This is someone at work who will assist you in meeting your return to work obligations.

Ask your treating health practitioner and employer to talk to each other about the plans for your return to work and the suitable duties that are available for you. You may be able to return to your pre-injury employment (the same activities and hours that you used to do), or you may need to return to ‘suitable employment’, which is a modified version of your previous role or alternative duties.

You can choose to have someone represent, assist and support you in the return to work process (this person cannot be a legal practitioner).

Staying positive can help you get back to work

Staying positive and keeping active after an injury can benefit your rehabilitation as well as your general wellbeing, and help you get back to work. The following tips may assist your rehabilitation:

- Focus on what you can do, rather than what you can't.
- Talk to your treating health practitioner about how you may be able to stay active.
- Talk to your family about how they can support you and help you to get better.
- If you're away from work, talk to your workmates about how you can stay connected with what's happening at work.
- Try not to get frustrated if things don't always go smoothly. Rehabilitation can take time and requires persistence.

Where to get help

If you need help at any stage during the return to work process, contact your employer, your Return to Work Coordinator, your WorkSafe Agent or the WorkSafe Advisory Service.

Visit the WorkSafe Victoria website.

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Please note that we cannot answer personal medical queries.
If you are looking for health or medical advice we recommend that you:

- talk to your doctor or pharmacist
- dial triple zero (000) in an emergency
- ring NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24.

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More information

Browse major trauma topics

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

- Major trauma services
- Discharge post major trauma
- Rehabilitation after major trauma
- Home and recovery
- Physical recovery after major trauma
- Mental health after major trauma
- Compensation, claims and finances
- Major trauma - personal stories and advice
- Returning to social and leisure activities
- Returning to work and study
- Rights and responsibilities

Major trauma services

- Major trauma in Victoria
  The Victorian State Trauma System provides urgent and coordinated care to people experiencing a major trauma event...
- Metropolitan and regional trauma services
  Metropolitan and trauma services provide world class emergency care services to people of all ages...
- Who's who in the emergency department
  The emergency department is staffed by highly trained clinicians, including nurses, doctors and other healthcare professionals...
- Rural and regional healthcare

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Some rural patients have to travel to regional centres or metropolitan areas for the healthcare they need. The Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme can subsidise travel and accommodation...

- From incident to recovery - major trauma services
  Explore interactive maps, hear from the experts and read about Phillip's personal journey...

**Discharge post major trauma**

- Major trauma discharge from hospital
  Discharge from hospital after a major trauma event can be confusing, find out more...

- Hospital discharge information for family and carers
  Family, friends and carers can provide both practical and emotional support to a person who has experienced a major trauma and is about to leave hospital...

- Hospitals, surgery and procedures
  A hospital stay can be planned or unexpected. Learn about the hospital journey from admission to discharge...

- Hospital costs and payments
  Treatment as a public patient in Victorian public hospitals is free to all Australian citizens and most permanent residents of Australia...

- Preparing to leave hospital
  Start your hospital discharge planning before you leave hospital. Speak with your healthcare team to understand the hospital’s discharge process to get the support you need in place...

- Communication in hospital
  There is a range of support to help you communicate with your doctor and hospital to get the services you need, from interpreters to special food and emotional support...

**Rehabilitation after major trauma**

- Rehabilitation after major trauma
  Rehabilitation services provide treatment to improve mobility, increase strength, pain management and mental health difficulties after a major trauma incident...

- Surgery - recovery and rehabilitation
  Major surgery can require some time to recover from. After your discharge from hospital, you may need intensive physical rehabilitation, or to simply take it easy for a few days. Make sure you get the...

- Victorian Paediatric Rehabilitation Services
  The Victorian Paediatric Rehabilitation Service caters for children and adolescents who require specialist interdisciplinary rehabilitation...

- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
  The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will transform the way in which people with disability access the support they need to achieve their goals and participate fully in community life...

- Chief Psychiatrist talks about major trauma
  The Chief Psychiatrist provides clinical leadership and promotes improvement in the quality and safety of mental health services...

- Physical disabilities
  Common physical disabilities and the issues relating to having a disability - find information on diagnosis, treatment and disability services...

- Who's who in your healthcare team
  Your healthcare team may include a doctor, dentist, pharmacist, medical specialists, allied health professionals and complementary medicine practitioners...

- Working with your healthcare team
  If you see a number of healthcare professionals, it is important to tell them about any other healthcare services you are using...

- Who to call in a crisis
  Immediate telephone assistance is available for all kinds of emergencies...

**Home and recovery**

- Transition care after hospital
  The Transition Care Program provides care through tailored support packages, while the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program provides a range of basic maintenance and support services...

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• Healthcare and support at home
  Home care services are available for people recovering from illness or surgery, frail older people, the elderly and people with disabilities...

• Post Acute Care Program
  The Post Acute Care (PAC) Program provides short-term services and support for those who need extra help at home after a public hospital stay...

• Aids and equipment at home
  Disability aids and equipment such as wheelchairs, walking frames and braces can help people with disabilities and the elderly gain more independence...

• Alcohol and drugs - dependence and addiction
  Asking for help when you first suspect you have an alcohol or drug problem is important. If you think you have an addiction, speak to your local doctor or phone Directline...

• Carers, caring and respite care services
  Learn more about the wide range of services and support available to carers in Victoria...

• Convalescence
  During convalescence, it may be beneficial to set goals for each day which will aid in your recovery...

• Coordinating hospital appointments
  Coordinating your hospital appointments well will ensure the process of diagnosing, treating and recovering from or living with medical issues runs as smoothly as possible...

• Counsellors
  Anyone who is struggling with a personal concern can seek help from a counsellor...

• Falls – services for older people
  Falls are a major cause of injury for older people. There are many services available to help prevent or recover from a fall...

• Healthcare and support in the community
  There is a range of community health services and supports available for people with disabilities and the elderly still living independently at home...

• Making healthcare decisions for someone else
  Family members may be involved in making healthcare decisions for you if you are unable to make decisions and it is not a medical emergency...

• Medications
  Medications include prescription, over-the-counter and complementary or herbal treatments. Taking medicines correctly can help reduce side effects...

• Medicine information leaflets for consumers
  A Consumer Medicines Information (CMI) leaflet gives you accurate information about the safety of your medication and how best to take it...

• National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
  The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will transform the way in which people with disability access the support they need to achieve their goals and participate fully in community life...

• Older people – preventing falls at home
  Falls are a major cause of injury for older people. Find out how you can prevent falls around your home...

• Pain and pain management
  Pain is our body's built-in alarm system. Learn about types of pain, what is acute, persistent or chronic pain and how to manage your pain...

• Seeing a specialist
  Medical specialists are doctors who have completed advanced education and training in a specific area of medicine...

• Surgery - recovery and rehabilitation
  Major surgery can require some time to recover from. After your discharge from hospital, you may need intensive physical rehabilitation, or to simply take it easy for a few days. Make sure you get the...

• Trauma and families
  When a family is affected by trauma, everyone will react in a different way...

Physical recovery after major trauma
- **Pain and pain management**
  Pain is our body's built-in alarm system. Learn about types of pain, what is acute, persistent or chronic pain and how to manage your pain.

- **Acquired brain injury**
  The long-term effects of brain injury will be different for each person and can range from mild to profound.

- **Rehabilitation after major trauma**
  Rehabilitation services provide treatment to improve mobility, increase strength, pain management and mental health difficulties after a major trauma incident.

- **Acquired brain injuries and spinal cord injuries**
  Acquired brain injuries and spinal cord injuries may have a significant effect on your intimate relationships, friendships, social networks, recreation and work activities.

- **Brain and nerves**
  The brain, nerves and spinal cord form part of the nervous system. Brain injury, tumours, disorders, headaches and seizures can affect the brain.

- **Physical disabilities**
  Common physical disabilities and the issues relating to having a disability – find information on diagnosis, treatment and disability services.

- **Healthcare and support in the community**
  There is a range of community health services and supports available for people with disabilities and the elderly still living independently at home.

- **Disability groups and networks**
  Connecting with other people who have a disability and their families can be a good way of getting informal advice and support.

- **Medications**
  Medications include prescription, over-the-counter and complementary or herbal treatments. Taking medicines correctly can help reduce side effects.

- **arbias**
  arbias provides specialist services for people with acquired brain injury.

- **Seeing an allied health professional**
  Allied health professionals are university-trained health practitioners who work as part of your healthcare team.

- **Spinal cord injury - paraplegia**
  Most people who have a spinal cord injury are young males, who have a greater tendency to indulge in risky behaviour.

- **Seeing a specialist**
  Medical specialists are doctors who have completed advanced education and training in a specific area of medicine.

**Mental health after major trauma**

- **Chief Psychiatrist talks about major trauma**
  The Chief Psychiatrist provides clinical leadership and promotes improvement in the quality and safety of mental health services.

- **Mental health services**
  There are a mix of public and private services in place to help people living with mental illness in Victoria.

- **Rural and regional mental health services**
  Public mental health services in rural and regional Victoria are often some distance away or more costly than they are in the city.

- **Mental health services and programs explained**
  If you think that you or someone you know has a mental health issue, there are a number of ways that you can seek advice, information and referral for general and mental health issues in Victoria.

- **Acquired brain injury**
  The long-term effects of brain injury will be different for each person and can range from mild to profound.

- **Caring for someone with mental illness**
  Being a carer for someone with a mental illness can be emotionally and physically demanding, but it can also be a rewarding experience.

- **Counselling, online and phone support for mental illness**

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There are many free mental health hotlines and mental health online support services available across Victoria which provide crisis support, information, resources, counselling and therapy to people.

- Counsellors
  Anyone who is struggling with a personal concern can seek help from a counsellor.

- Let's talk about depression in men
  Depression affects men of all ages, however men continue to seek help for mental health issues at significantly lower rates than women. Jonathan experienced depression and anxiety throughout his...

- Medications
  Medications include prescription, over-the-counter and complementary or herbal treatments. Taking medicines correctly can help reduce side effects.

- Psychiatrist
  A psychiatrist is a medical specialist who can diagnose and treat mental health issues and emotional problems.

- Psychologist
  Psychologists are educated in the science of how people feel, behave and react.

- Seeing a specialist
  Medical specialists are doctors who have completed advanced education and training in a specific area of medicine.

- 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...

- Trauma and children - two to five years
  Preschoolers may not have the words but will show their distress at traumatic events through changes in behaviour and functioning.

- Trauma and families
  When a family is affected by trauma, everyone will react in a different way.

- Trauma and teenagers - common reactions
  A teenager may be deeply upset by a traumatic event, but not share their feelings with their parents.

- Trauma - reaction and recovery
  It is normal to have strong emotional or physical reactions after a distressing or frightening event, and help is available.

- Veterans, war and mental health services
  The Australian Government scheme ‘At Ease’ offers support, counselling and other resources to help war veterans and Australian Defence Force personnel living with depression, anxiety and other kinds...

- Who's who in mental health services
  There are a range of mental healthcare and welfare professionals who can help you or someone you care for.

Compensation, claims and finances

- TAC compensation after a transport accident
  Financial compensation after a transport accident is available from the TAC for qualifying Victorians.

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

- Victims of crime
  Victims of crime in Victoria are entitled to free help and may also obtain victims of crime compensation and receive victim support services.

- Understanding health insurance
  There are many health insurance providers on the market that offer a wide variety of healthcare plans.

- Veterans - compensation after major trauma
  Support for veterans who have experienced a major trauma is available from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

- Hospital stay – financial support and family accommodation

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All Victorian hospitals have a patient services staff and social workers on staff. They can help you and your family with hospital accommodation and hospital support services.

- **Financial support for carers**
  The Australian and Victorian Governments offer a number of carer support services to people who provide care to someone with a disability or mental illness, with a medical condition, after an illness...

- **Hospital costs and payments**
  Treatment as a public patient in Victorian public hospitals is free to all Australian citizens and most permanent residents of Australia...

- **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)**
  The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will transform the way in which people with disability access the support they need to achieve their goals and participate fully in community life...

- **MoneyHelp**
  MoneyHelp provides a telephone financial counselling service and online financial information and advice to help people who are experiencing financial difficulty or debt.

**Major trauma - personal stories and advice**

- **Chief Psychiatrist talks about major trauma**
  The Chief Psychiatrist provides clinical leadership and promotes improvement in the quality and safety of mental health services...

- **Steven shares his major trauma story**
  Steven talks about his major trauma incident...

- **The 'new norm' - Sharon and Phillip's story**
  Sharon talks about caring for Phillip from accident to recovering at home...

- **Colin's story about his son John**
  Five years ago, Colin's son, John (not his real name), suffered a brain injury in a high-speed motor vehicle crash. Colin shares his experience and tips to help other trauma patients and their...

- **Angela's story - a nurse's major trauma experience**
  Angela, a nurse, was nursed by her colleagues in the hospital she work at. ’I have never cried so much in my life’...

- **From incident to recovery - major trauma services**
  Explore interactive maps, hear from the experts and read about Phillip's personal journey.

**Returning to social and leisure activities**

- **Relationships**
  Communication, family, work, separation and divorce, conflict, abuse and improving relationships...

- **Vision loss - recreational activities**
  Many recreational activities can be reworked to suit a person who is blind or has low vision...

- **10 tips for making new friends**
  Forget about gossip and build strong relationships... 10 tips for making new friends...

- **Vision loss - social events**
  With planning and preparation, most social events can be adapted to suit people with vision loss...

- **Travel assistance for people with a disability**
  If you or someone you care for has a disability and needs help to get around, there are support services available...

**Returning to work and study**

- **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 and your health**
  Work can provide satisfaction, but loss of a job or work-related problems can affect our physical, emotional and mental health...
• Returning to tertiary study after traumatic injury
  If you have experienced major trauma and previously studied at a tertiary institution, contact student services for support to return...

• Travel assistance for people with a disability
  If you or someone you care for has a disability and needs help to get around, there are support services available...

Rights and responsibilities

• Health Complaints Commissioner
  The Health Complaints Commissioner (HCC) resolves complaints about healthcare and the handling of health information in Victoria. It can also investigate providers who pose a serious danger to the...

• Office of the Public Advocate (OPA)
  The OPA promotes the rights, interests and dignity of people with a disability...

• Patient and carer rights in hospital
  You and your carers should expect clear communication about medical issues and treatment options and costs in hospital in a way that you can understand...

• Disability Services Commissioner
  The Disability Services Commissioner is an independent agency that helps resolve complaints raised by, or on behalf of, people who receive disability services in Victoria...

• Disability rights, discrimination and the law
  If you feel that your human rights have been violated or that you have been discriminated against, you have the right to make a complaint...

• Making a complaint on behalf of a patient as a carer
  Carers have the right to make a complaint on behalf of a person in their care to a healthcare professional, service or regulatory body...

• Informed consent for carers
  Informed consent means that a person understands their condition and any proposed medical treatment and carers can help with the decision-making process...

• Making a complaint about a mental health service
  If you are dissatisfied with a mental health treatment or service, you have the right to make a complaint and have your concerns addressed...

• Hospitals feedback and complaints
  You have rights when seeking medical care, including a right to comment on your care, and to have your concerns addressed...

• Making a complaint about disability services
  If you are unhappy with the way a disability service has treated you, you have the right to complain and to have your concerns addressed...

• Making a complaint about a doctor (GP)
  If you feel uneasy about the conduct of your doctor, it may be a warning sign that something is wrong...

• Informed consent for medical treatment
  Informed consent means having enough information about a medical procedure to decide whether to have it done...

• Medical treatment decision makers
  You can appoint someone to be your medical power of attorney, also known as ‘enduring power of attorney (medical treatment)’, to make medical decisions on your behalf when, in certain circumstances...

• Advance care plans
  Advance care plans can help the people close to you and those caring for you to know what is important to you about the level of healthcare and quality of life you would want...

• People with a disability who experience violence, abuse or neglect
  People with a disability who experience violence, abuse or neglect can seek help from a range of services specifically designed to help them...

• Confidentiality and privacy in healthcare
  There are laws that set out how healthcare professionals can collect and store your health information and when they are allowed to share it...

• Complaints about health services
  The Health Complaints Commissioner can accept complaints about anyone who claims to provide a health service...
Related Information

- Carers, caring and respite care services
  Learn more about the wide range of services and support available to carers in Victoria...
- Returning to tertiary study after traumatic injury
  If you have experienced major trauma and previously studied at a tertiary institution, contact student services for support to return...
- Travel assistance for people with a disability
  If you or someone you care for has a disability and needs help to get around, there are support services available...
- Financial support after a workplace trauma
  Workers compensation insurance covers medical expenses of workers injured at work...
- Workplace safety - manual handling injuries
  A person can be injured when handling objects in a variety of ways including pulling, pushing, holding or restraining...

Home

Content Partner

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