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# RETURNING TO WORK

*Many people who are able to do so go back to their jobs after they finish their treatment. Many say it helps them get back to normal. But it can take time to recover fully from treatment. Some people find that it works well to go part time at first and gradually increase working hours.*

## Talk to your Doctor

Talk to your doctor about when you might be ready to go back to work and what to expect. He or she can help you come up with a realistic timeframe for returning to work. Everyone recovers at their own pace, so be sure to let your healthcare team know how your recovery is going. They can then make adjustments to your recovery time based on your own unique situation.

**LIFE**  
**IS BIGGER**  
**THAN CANCER**

## Talk to Your Employer

When you believe you are close to returning to work, contact your boss or human resources department to arrange your transition back to work. Make sure you discuss any return-to-work provisions that may be in place or required. Be realistic about what you can expect to accomplish and what your employer can expect of you. Starting work gradually, with part-time or flexible hours, often helps. If you work in a demanding or very physical job, you may have to change the way in which you work. If your work duties will need to be modified, try to get help from a vocational rehabilitation counsellor.

## Try Practice Days

It's important to make sure that you are both physically and emotionally ready to return to work. Try to create a work day at home. Get up at the same time as you would for work, get ready and then work at home doing something of a similar intensity to your paid work. If this is too much for you, use your remaining time away from work to plan ways to conserve your energy or to help plan out a realistic work schedule based on your abilities.

## What if you can no longer work?

Some people find that they can't return to work after cancer treatment, even if they want to. If you can no longer work, this can be very stressful. You will most likely still need a regular income to pay bills, the mortgage or rent and other living expenses.

It's important that you get the support and advice that you need. Find out about financial assistance programs and government benefits. You may qualify for Canada Pension Plan (CPP) disability benefits if you have a disability that prevents you from working at any job on a regular basis. Social workers at your hospital can help you learn more about these benefits.

You may find it useful to see a financial advisor or planner to discuss financial concerns. Your bank may have a financial advisor you can talk to. The [Financial Planners Standards Council \(FPSC\)](#) has helpful information on finding a certified financial planner.



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# RESOURCES

## Your Rights & Responsibilities

If you're concerned about whether your employer will keep your job or accommodate your return to work, consult the [BC Human Rights Coalition](#) ([infobchrc@clasbc.net](mailto:infobchrc@clasbc.net) or 1-855-685-622) for advice and information on your rights.

## See a Counsellor

Emotional rehabilitation is important in any return-to-work plan. Counselling can help establishing healthy coping strategies, manage feelings of depression or anxiety, and provide valuable support.

## Cancer and Work

Designed to help you with returning or staying at work. The [Cancer and Work website](#) is collaboratively built using the knowledge from cancer survivors, healthcare providers, vocational rehabilitation specialists, human resources professionals, and other experts.

## PeerMatch

A one-to-one telephone program that connects people living with cancer and caregivers with trained volunteers who offer encouragement and share ideas for coping—all from their unique perspective as someone who's been there. For more information and to get registered, visit [match.cancer.ca](http://match.cancer.ca) or call 1-888-939-3333.

## CancerConnection.ca

An online community for people with cancer and caregivers to share experiences and find support. Available 24 hours a day. Visit [cancerconnection.ca](http://cancerconnection.ca) for more information

## More Information

The Canadian Cancer Society offers a variety of services to support individuals and their caregivers going through a cancer experience. Visit [cancer.ca](http://cancer.ca) or call our Cancer Information Service for more information at 1-888-939-3333. Ask about specific services available in your community to assist you during this time in your life.