

**MUSCULOSKELETAL
AUSTRALIA
YOUR
MUSCULOSKELETAL
HEALTH AT WORK**



WorkWise



MSK.ORG.AU



WorkWise

A practical guide for people with arthritis, back pain,
and other musculoskeletal conditions to help you
continue to work, change jobs, understand your rights
and more.

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WorkWise was made possible through a generous grant from The Iorine Estelle Demmer and Hugh Eardley Demmer Charitable Trust managed by Equity Trustees.



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Welcome!

All musculoskeletal conditions, such as arthritis, back pain and gout, can have an effect on your day-to-day life, including work.

That's why we've developed WorkWise to provide you with the information and support you need to help you manage at work.

We give you practical tips, strategies, and resources to help you continue to work, change jobs, understand your rights and more.

Who is Musculoskeletal Australia?

We've supported people with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions for over 50 years.

It all started in 1968, when Dr Leslie Koadlow, a passionate rheumatologist, decided we could do better. Newly diagnosed patients kept coming to his clinic totally overwhelmed, isolated and confused about where to start.

A firm believer in the benefit of 'real people helping real people', he set up the Rheumatism and Arthritis Association of Victoria (RAAV) with his secretary Alice Petty and patient Mollie Riches. RAAV became a place for those living with musculoskeletal conditions to get informed and get supported.

Fifty years later we're still helping people with information and support. We're here to help you.

Our programs and services

National Help Line – weekdays 9am-5pm. Our free Help Line is staffed by nurses and experienced volunteers.

They can help you:

- with information on arthritis, back pain, gout, fibromyalgia and other musculoskeletal conditions, and commonly prescribed treatments
- find your way through the complex health, disability and social services systems
- find community resources in your area.

Contact our MSK Help Line on 1800 263 265 or email helpline@msk.org.au.

Information resources – we have a large range of resources to help you learn about your condition and live well. They include:

- website: www.msk.org.au – access all of our information, videos, products, articles and more wherever you are, 24/7.
- MSK News: our eNewsletter delivers topical articles to your inbox every three weeks. [Subscribe today!](#)
- free webinars – we work with experts in musculoskeletal health and other areas such as pain management, mental health and exercise to deliver [free webinars](#) you can access from the comfort of your home. Recordings of our [past webinars](#) are also available to view at any time.
- information sheets: on different musculoskeletal conditions, treatments and ways to live well with a musculoskeletal condition are available to [download](#) from our website, or contact our Help Line to have copies sent to you in the post.
- online book [Managing your pain: An A-Z guide](#): provides you with handy tips and simple strategies to help you manage your pain.
- social media: follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#) to stay up-to-date on the latest news, research, events and more.
- Koadlow Community Lecture: this [free event](#) is held annually and features expert speakers on topics such as medicinal cannabis, stem cell therapy, pain management and complementary therapies.

WorkWise – provides workers the support and resources they need to manage their condition and continue to work, change jobs and know their rights. *WorkWise was made possible through a generous grant from The Iorine Estelle Demmer and Hugh Eardley Demmer Charitable Trust managed by Equity Trustees.*

MSK Kids – supports children living with juvenile arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions, and their families, with a range of [resources and programs](#).

Peer support – we have a network of [support groups](#) that meet in person and online. They provide an opportunity to share information, ideas and experiences and discuss practical ways to manage living with a musculoskeletal condition.

Contact our free Help Line

Speak with our nurses for confidential information and support.

T: 1800 263 265

E: helpline@msk.org.au

We're here to help.

What are musculoskeletal conditions?

You've probably heard of arthritis. But did you know it's not just one condition?

Arthritis is often used to describe many different conditions that affect the muscles, bones and/or joints. But the more accurate definition of these conditions is musculoskeletal conditions.

Musculoskeletal is a big word – and it's a little hard to say - but it simply relates to the bones, muscles, joints, cartilage, ligaments, tendons, and bursae in your body.

Some common musculoskeletal conditions are osteoarthritis, back pain, rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, osteoporosis, gout, polymyalgia rheumatica, lupus and ankylosing spondylitis.

Anyone can develop a musculoskeletal condition, including children and young people. It can affect people from all backgrounds, ages and lifestyles.

Your musculoskeletal system

To understand how musculoskeletal conditions work, it's helpful to know a little about the muscles, bones and joints that make up your musculoskeletal system.

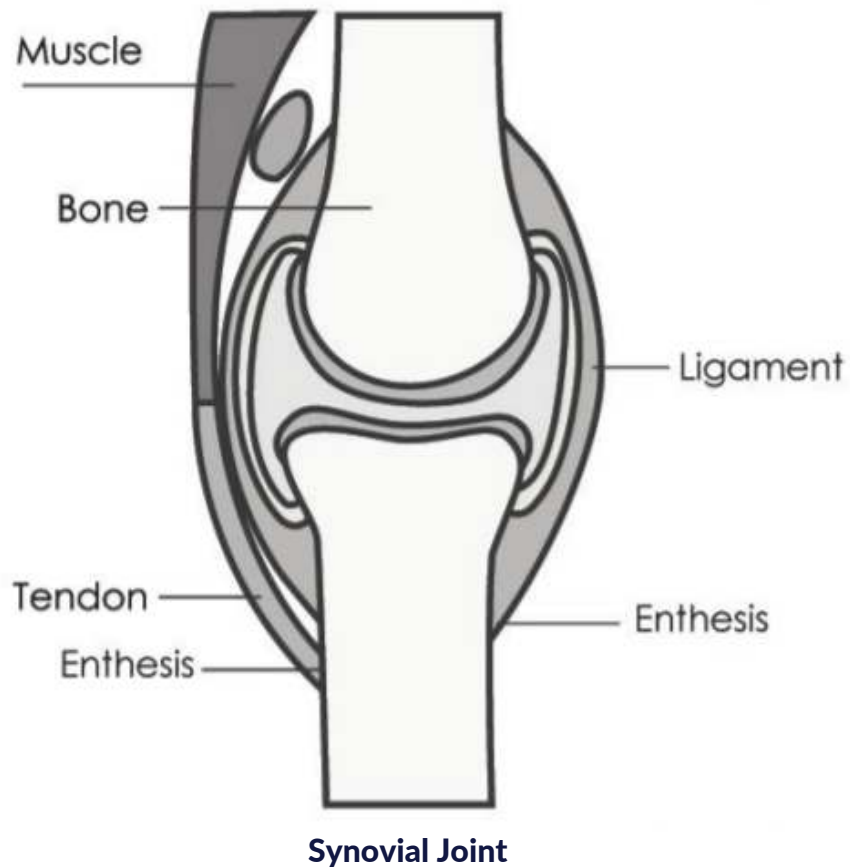
Joints are places where bones meet. Bones, muscles, ligaments and tendons all work together so that you can bend, twist, stretch and move about.

The ends of your bones are covered in a thin layer of a smooth tissue called cartilage. It acts like a slippery cushion that helps your joint move smoothly.

Around most of your joints is a joint capsule. This keeps your bones in place. Inside the capsule is a thick fluid that nourishes and lubricates your joint (like oil for a squeaky hinge).

Ligaments hold the joint together by joining one bone to another. Your muscles are attached to the bones by tendons. As your muscles contract, they pull on the bones to make the joint move.

Musculoskeletal conditions affect the normal functioning of your joints, muscles, bones and surrounding structures. The way this happens will depend on the condition you have.



Symptoms

Musculoskeletal conditions affect people in different ways and each condition will have specific symptoms. However, common symptoms are:

- pain
- swelling, redness and warmth in a joint
- painful muscles
- stiffness or reduced movement of a joint
- general symptoms such as extreme tiredness (fatigue) and feeling unwell.

All musculoskeletal conditions can have an effect on your day-to-day life, including work.

WorkWise will provide information to help you manage your symptoms, and give you tips, strategies, and resources to help you continue to work, change jobs, understand your rights and more.

How musculoskeletal conditions can affect you at work

The extent to which your condition affects you at work will depend on many factors such as:

- the condition you have, e.g. [back pain](#), [rheumatoid arthritis](#), [osteoarthritis](#), [fibromyalgia](#)
- the symptoms you have - e.g. [pain](#), [fatigue](#), swollen joints - and the severity of these symptoms
- the impact your condition has on your physical and mental wellbeing, e.g. changes to your joint structure, reduced stamina, [brain fog](#), [anxiety](#)
- how well your condition is managed, both medically and through [self-care](#)
- any other health conditions you may have
- the type of work you do, e.g. working in an office, construction, nursing, farming, transport.

Some of the more common symptoms are:

Joint and muscle stiffness - affects many people, especially when waking (morning stiffness) and after periods of inactivity (e.g. sitting at a desk, in a car). It may be caused by inflammation in the joint, lack of movement preventing the 'oil' in your joints (synovial fluid) from lubricating your joints, ageing or damage to the cushiony cartilage inside the joint, or muscle tightness.

With inflammatory conditions (e.g. [rheumatoid arthritis](#), [lupus](#), [gout](#)), episodes of stiffness may last for over an hour. With conditions such as [osteoarthritis](#), it tends to go away more quickly. To deal with joint stiffness, you can: take a warm shower or use [heat packs](#) on the affected areas, do some [gentle exercise](#) and stretching, manage your [stress](#) and/or take [anti-inflammatory medications](#) as needed (talk with your doctor or pharmacist for advice).

Persistent pain – is something people with musculoskeletal conditions deal with daily. Sometimes it's low-level pain and easily managed. But at other times, it's very much in the front of your mind, holding your attention. When your pain persists at work, it can be a real struggle. That's why it's important to have a range of pain management strategies you can use when and where you need them. A good place to start is our [A-Z guide for managing pain](#), which has many practical strategies to help you cope.

Fatigue – is more than just being tired. It's a feeling of physical, mental and/or emotional exhaustion and can make even the simplest of tasks difficult. But there are things you can do to [manage fatigue](#) so that you can get on and do the things you need to do.

Difficulties or changes to movement and functioning – with some musculoskeletal conditions, changes or damage to joint structures, weakened muscles, loss of fitness or stamina can affect how you move and do certain things. Working with your doctor, an [occupational therapist](#) and/or [physiotherapist](#) can help you manage this to lessen its impact on you at work.

Brain fog and poor concentration – [poor sleep](#), [pain](#), [fatigue](#) and some medications can make it feel like your head is full of cotton wool, and make it incredibly difficult to focus or concentrate. The good news is there are strategies to help you deal with these issues in most situations. [Find out how](#).

It's not only your symptoms that can affect your performance at work and your career path. There are other factors that need to be acknowledged.

Time off work – whether it's for medical appointments or being too unwell to work, taking time off can be a big issue for many people with chronic conditions, leading to feelings of anxiety, guilt, frustration and fear of discrimination. But there are things you can do. Being proactive and knowing your rights (see page 16) is key to working well with a musculoskeletal condition.

Medication side effects – such as nausea, fatigue and headaches – can appear on top of your other symptoms, making work difficult and miserable. If you're experiencing regular side effects from your medication, talk with your doctor about potential alternatives.

Lack of sleep – when you live with persistent pain, getting good quality, regular sleep can be tough. Check out our article on [painsomnia](#) for tips on how to get a good night's sleep.

Worry about discrimination or being treated differently – if you choose to disclose your condition (see page 21) to your employer or colleagues, it's understandable to feel concerned or nervous that you may be treated differently. So it's essential to know your rights about discrimination in the workplace.

Increased stress and anxiety – all the above factors, as well as issues such as financial stress, commuting to and from work, keeping up with your workload, completing any additional training or skills development etc, can increase your levels of stress and anxiety. Apart from the significant impact this can have on mental health, we know our physical health is negatively affected by periods of increased stress and anxiety. Pain and fatigue become more intense, sleep is affected, as is concentration and blood pressure. Headaches and stomach upsets may also become more frequent. [Learn some practical things](#) you can do to manage these feelings, so you can take care of your physical and mental health.

While many of the issues raised here sound scary, there are strategies you can use, and help you can get from your healthcare team or your employer (if you choose to tell them about your condition - see page 21) to manage most of these things.

Why working, and staying at work, is so important

Why do we do what we do? In particular, why do we spend so much of our waking hours for most of our lives working??

Apart from the obvious answer - we need money to survive in this world - working is good for us.

Note: In this section, we're referring specifically to what's known as 'good work' – or work that's safe, fair and provides workers with good conditions and opportunities.

This type of work is good for our health and wellbeing. It gives us confidence, builds self-esteem, challenges us, makes us happy, allows us to learn new skills, meet new people and let's not forget the big one – it gives us money.

Let's explore these benefits:

Money - being paid for our hard work gives us a level of financial security. It means we can support ourselves and our families – we can pay our bills, buy food and clothing and pay for medical care. We can explore our interests and hobbies, travel, and have fun. And we can save for the future. Being paid also provides that sense of being appreciated and valued for our commitment to the job.

Identity – as well as all of the other things that make up our identity and how we see ourselves – such as family, gender identity, sexual orientation, personal interests, experiences, hopes and dreams – our work is a big part of our identity. The skills and attributes that we gain through education and training, and the experiences we have on the job, all shape the person we are.

Meaning and purpose – knowing that you're contributing to something bigger than just ourselves - whether that's a business, the economy, or society at large - is meaningful.

Challenge – work tests and challenges us. It forces us to adapt and problem-solve. And by doing these things, we develop our skills and ourselves, giving us a sense of achievement and pride.

Daily structure – working gives us our routine and structures our day.

People – most of us work with other people from all walks of life, backgrounds, ages. We have the chance to learn from them, collaborate, socialise and have fun, build contacts for future work opportunities and find support.

As well as these general reasons for why we work, there are many health benefits associated with working:

- Having a steady income means you're able to pay for a place to live, food to eat, health care and pay your bills. These all have an effect on your overall health and wellbeing.
- Having a job is associated with positive self-esteem, self-worth, purpose and identity.
- Having a higher income is associated with reduced rates of chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.
- Workers returning to work after injury or illness see improvements in their mental health and decrease in stress and psychological distress, as well as improvements in their physical health.

So as you can see, there are so many benefits to working. And WorkWise will help you with information and tips to help you safely stay at work for as long as possible. We'll also provide you with resources to help you remain healthy and well if you're forced to leave work or take time off due to your musculoskeletal condition.



Managing your musculoskeletal condition at work

Finding and keeping a job when you have a musculoskeletal condition can be difficult. Pain, fatigue, medication side effects, and the unpredictability of your condition can all affect your ability to work.

The extent to which this happens will depend on many things such as the condition you have, e.g. back pain, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, gout, how severe it is, how well it's being managed and the type of work you do. Physically demanding work, such as building, nursing and farming, will be impacted by painful joints or restricted movements. And any work that requires you to focus and concentrate, especially for extended periods, will be affected by brain fog, pain and lack of sleep.

The good news is you can do things to help manage these issues. We've listed a bunch of strategies here.

Note: we understand that some of these strategies may not be possible for all workplaces or conditions. However, the majority of them can be adapted in some way to suit your needs.

Work with your healthcare team to ensure your condition is under control and well managed. This may involve your GP, rheumatologist, physiotherapist, podiatrist, psychologist and/or occupational therapist. They'll also help you develop a plan to manage at work when your condition flares.

Evaluate your workspace. Whatever your setting - office, retail, manufacturing, hospitality, transport – there are options for making it more supportive for you. The first step is to talk with an occupational therapist or physiotherapist about the issues you're facing and develop some strategies to manage them. They may include simple things such as being aware of your posture throughout the day and regularly changing your position to reduce pain, strain and fatigue. They may also include changing your workspace to make it work for you. For example, using a standing/sitting desk, rearranging the setup so that items you use most often are close by, sitting on a chair or perch instead of standing for long periods, using a headset on your phone, getting lumbar supports for your chair or car seat, using a trolley to help you move heavy items. Some of these options may be easy to do without going through your employer, but some changes may need their involvement. If your employer knows about your condition (see page 21), you can discuss these changes together. However, if you've chosen not to disclose your condition, your employer is still obliged to make reasonable adjustments to your workstation or environment to ensure your comfort and safety. Things such as stand-up desks, footrests, wrist rests, height-adjustable and ergonomic chairs are all considered reasonable. Read our information on Employment FAQs and visit Safe Work Australia for more information.

Take control of your pain. Chronic pain can affect your ability to do the things you want and need to do, your quality of sleep, concentration and mood. Basically, it sucks. That's why you need a toolbox of strategies for managing your pain. There's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to pain management. So having several strategies you know *work for you* is essential. They may include gentle exercise, medications, heat and cold, stretches, massage, splints, braces and aids and equipment. It'll take some trial and error, but it's well worth the effort to find what works best for you. You can then pull them out of your toolbox when needed, giving you more control over your pain. Your doctor and physiotherapist can also give you tips for managing your pain while working. For more information and practical tips, read Managing your pain: An A-Z guide.

Along with pain, fatigue is a huge issue for people with musculoskeletal conditions. Fatigue is very different from just being a little tired. It's overwhelming physical and mental tiredness that makes every activity a struggle. But there are things you can do to manage it so that it has less impact on your life and your work. Find out how.

Manage your meds. Sometimes medications cause side effects like nausea, headaches, lightheadedness and drowsiness. This can make it really hard to concentrate at work. It may even make it dangerous to perform some work duties such as driving or operating machinery. If you find that your medications are causing issues, talk with your doctor about possible alternatives.

Get a good night's sleep. We all go through periods when sleep is elusive. Chronic pain and anxiety are just a couple of things that can affect our ability to get enough quality sleep. But sleep is essential for good physical and mental health, and to give us the 'get up and go' we need to get to work and work productively. If you're having issues sleeping, don't just put up with it. There are many things you can do to get the sleep you need.

Take a break. We all need to take breaks for our physical and mental wellbeing, so when you can, get up, move and clear your head. Walk to the photocopier or around the block, do some simple stretches, step outside and do some deep breathing or visualisation. Whatever helps you manage your pain, fatigue, stress and brain fog, do it.

Acknowledge the unpredictability of your condition. It's a fact that musculoskeletal conditions are unpredictable. You often won't know you're about to have a flare until one happens. Apart from increased pain, stiffness and fatigue, having a flare can be really stressful as you worry about getting things done – at work and at home. So having a plan in place for managing - before a flare occurs - means you can be proactive. This may involve:

- developing a plan with your healthcare team that will help you cope at work,
- prioritising and pacing your activities so that you get any important, time-dependent tasks done when you're feeling your best,
- discussing flexible work arrangements - such as working from home or adjusting your hours - with your employer,
- taking time off work or reducing your hours until you can get the flare under control.

The important thing is that you're prepared, with a plan of attack in place for when it's needed, that works for both you and your employer.

Use your scheduled breaks. It's easy when you're feeling under pressure - whether it's from your employer or pressure you've put on yourself - to ignore your lunch or tea breaks and just keep working. But this will only add to your stress, pain and fatigue. You need to take some downtime during your day to eat, drink and give your mind and body a break. If you can, get outdoors and breathe in some fresh air. When you return from your break you'll feel better, have a clearer head, and be more productive.

Dealing with time off work. We all need time off work from time to time, but for many people with musculoskeletal conditions it may happen more often than they'd like. Attending healthcare appointments during working hours or having a flare means you may quickly go through your personal leave. If this is a concern or problem for you, discuss your options with your healthcare team. Are you able to attend appointments via telehealth or outside of your usual working hours? An occupational therapist or physiotherapist may have some solutions for working during a flare and reducing the pain and strain on your joints. And if you've disclosed your condition to your employer (see page 21), discuss your concerns with them. Together you should be able to develop a plan to help you balance time off and the work duties you need to complete. One of the silver linings of the COVID pandemic is that we've discovered that many jobs can be done productively from home. So working from home may be an option. As too are aids and equipment that protect your joints and save energy, or even changing the work you do at your workplace. Being proactive and knowing your rights (see page 16) is key to working well with a musculoskeletal condition.

Managing changes to your abilities and functioning. Unfortunately, some musculoskeletal conditions will change a person's ability to do specific tasks. For example, someone with back pain may find sitting for long periods impossible. Or a person with arthritis in their hands may find repetitive work such as typing extremely painful. Talking with an occupational therapist or physiotherapist can help you find potential solutions to these issues. Whether it's finding new ways to do work tasks, using special equipment and aids to support you and protect your joints, or managing your pain while at work, they'll tailor a solution to your specific needs.

Stay active with regular exercise. Whatever condition you have, exercise is an important and effective part of your management plan. Regular exercise can help reduce some of the symptoms (e.g. pain, stiffness) caused by your condition and improve your joint mobility and strength. It will also give you more energy, help you sleep better, improve your mood, and improve your general health and wellbeing - which will all help you manage at work.

Eat well and stay hydrated. Your body works best when you eat a wide range of healthy foods. Most people feel better if they eat a balanced diet full of fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes, grains and cereals, lean meat (or vegetarian alternative, e.g. tofu) and choose foods that are low in fats, salt and sugar. Eating a balanced diet and drinking enough water each day will provide you with better energy levels, help you maintain your weight, and give you a greater sense of wellbeing. Try to have a few home-cooked meals in your freezer on standby for those days when you're not feeling well enough to cook. Simply thaw, heat and eat.

These are some things you can do to manage your condition and continue to work. However, there may come a time when these strategies no longer work.

If that's the case for you, read our information about Changing jobs (see page 32) and Your rights (see page 16) to help you navigate these changes.



Your rights at work

Many people worry that if they tell their employer (see page 21) they have a musculoskeletal condition, they'll be treated differently or discriminated against.

That's why it's so important to know your rights at work.

The first thing you need to know is - **disability discrimination in the workplace is against the law.**

You're protected against discrimination by the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992, Fair Work Act 2009, and state and territory legislation.

Although you might not consider your condition a 'disability', the definition used in the *Disability Discrimination Act* is quite broad, and "includes **physical**, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological and learning disabilities. It also includes physical disfigurement and the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms, such as the HIV virus. The Act covers disabilities that people have now, had in the past, may have in the future or are believed to have".

What is disability discrimination?

Disability discrimination is when a person with a disability is treated unequally, less favourably, or not given the same opportunities as other people, *because of their disability*.

Discrimination may be direct or indirect.

Direct discrimination is when you're treated less favourably than a person without a musculoskeletal condition in the same or similar circumstances. For example, you're qualified for a job but you're not hired because you told the employer that you have a musculoskeletal condition.

Indirect discrimination can be "unintentional or accidental. It occurs when a practice, policy or rule that applies to everyone causes unreasonable disadvantage to a person with disability". For example, all staff are expected to attend breakfast meetings in the office, but morning pain and stiffness make attending in person extremely difficult for you. The employer has the ability to adjust this practice and allow you to attend these meetings by video chat, which is a reasonable adjustment to make. Your employer can only refuse to make 'reasonable adjustments' if they can prove that this will cause 'unjustifiable hardship' on the business.

Let's look at some of those terms:

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), employers are obligated to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate a person's disability, unless that adjustment would result in unjustifiable hardship. Reasonable adjustments include:

- modifying work premises - for example, providing a chair or perch for someone working in retail who has arthritis in their knees, to allow them to sit when they need to, rather than stand for long periods.
- changes to job design, work schedules or other work practices - for example, working from home or attending meetings via video chat to allow a person with rheumatoid arthritis to work even if their condition is flaring. Or flexible working hours to give a person with fibromyalgia the ability to work later in the day when their symptoms are under control and they're most productive.
- modifying equipment – for example, providing a sit/stand desk for a person with low back pain, a telephone headset to replace a handset for a receptionist with arthritis in their hands.

Also under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)*, employers do not have to make adjustments if they can show that making these adjustments will cause the business unreasonable costs or major difficulties. This is 'unjustifiable hardship'. However it's up to the employer to show that any adjustments would cause the business hardship.

Harassment and bullying in the workplace

We all have the right to feel safe and secure in our workplace. And this right is also protected by the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and *Fair Work Act 2009*.

Disability discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably simply because they have a disability. This discrimination can include harassment and bullying.

The *Fair Work Amendment Act 2013* defines workplace **bullying** as “repeated unreasonable behaviour by an individual towards a worker which creates a risk to health and safety”. Bullying can include things such as aggressive behaviour, yelling, giving someone impossible jobs and deadlines, deliberately changing rosters to inconvenience a specific person and offensive language.

A person may be targeted by a bully because they have a disability, or for an unrelated issue, or for no known reason.

Harassment includes things such as making derogatory comments, insulting remarks, or taunting someone about their disability. Harassment may occur repeatedly or as a one-off incident.

It's important to note that people often have different ideas as to what's acceptable behaviour in the workplace. Just because someone didn't mean to be offensive, doesn't mean that their comments or behaviours are ok, especially if you're upset or offended as a direct result. There are things you can do to address this situation.

Read the Fair Work Ombudsman info about harassment and bullying, and where to get help, as well as the Australian Human Rights Commission fact sheet to learn more about bullying and harassment, and what you can do if you're being bullied or harassed at work.

Unfair dismissal

Your employer can't sack you or force you to resign just because you have a musculoskeletal condition.

If you think you've been unfairly dismissed, [check out this quiz](#) from the Fair Work Commission. It takes you through a series of questions that will help you see if you're eligible for a remedy under the national unfair dismissal laws. It provides useful info to help you through the process and links for more resources.

Seek professional advice

Discrimination, bullying, unfair dismissal – it's all scary stuff. And it's complicated. Most of us won't understand the intricacies of the Acts and the national, state and territory laws involved.

There are also very specific – and sometimes very short – timeframes in which you can act, if you're seeking compensation or some form of resolution. For example, in the case of [unfair dismissal](#), the timeframe is 21 days.

That's why it's really important that you seek professional advice as soon as possible.

Fair Work Ombudsman

The [Fair Work Ombudsman](#) provides information about workplace rights and how to resolve workplace issues. They also have an Infoline - 13 13 94 - available weekdays between 8am - 5.30pm.

As the average wait time to get through on the Infoline is about 30 minutes, make sure you have all of your relevant information ready to go. And check out their [Contact us webpage](#), which has links to resources focusing on commonly asked questions. This may answer your question or reduce the time you're on the phone with them.

The Fair Work Commission also has information about [getting legal help from sources](#) such as Community Legal Centres, unions and professional organisations.

Unions

Your union can also help if you feel like you've been discriminated against, bullied or harassed. They can provide you with information and support, help you understand your rights, and hopefully resolve the issue quickly.

The Fair Work Ombudsmen provides links to national, as well as state and territory unions, so if you're not sure how to contact your union or which union represents your workplace. [Visit their website for details.](#)

Lawyers

If you decide you'd like to employ a lawyer, make sure they specialise in employment law. The websites of the Law Society/Institutes in each state or territory have a search function that enables you to find a lawyer who specialises in specific areas of law - including employment law.

Don't forget to talk with family and friends. They may be able to recommend a lawyer.

Once you have a short list of lawyers that you think may be appropriate for your case, do your research. Check out their websites and social media. Look for reviews, as well as articles or blogs they've written that highlight that they're proficient in employment law. Once you've reduced your list to a manageable size, it's time to meet with them. Choose the lawyer you feel confident with.

More to explore

- Employment law: Your rights and entitlements ([video](#)).
Jessica Dawson-Field, Employment Associate, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers, 10 March 2021
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ND5eIQjEpA>
- Australian Human Rights Commission
Protects and promotes human rights in Australia and internationally.
<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights>
 - o A quick guide to Australian discrimination laws
Australian Human Rights Commission, revised November 2014
https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/GPGB_quick_guide_to_discrimination_laws_0.pdf?_ga=2.150624694.143975440.1621212830-1763350760.1618877341
 - o Know your rights: Disability discrimination
Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012
<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/know-your-rights-disability-discrimination>
- Australian Unions Support Centre
Provides free and confidential assistance and information for all workplace issues.
<https://support.australianunions.org.au/hc/en-au>
- Fair Work Commission
Australia's national workplace relations tribunal, established by the *Fair Work Act 2009*. It's responsible for administering the provisions of the Act.
<https://www.fwc.gov.au/>
 - o Bullying and harassment
Fair Work Commission
<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/bullying-and-harassment>
 - o Protection from discrimination at work
Fair Work Commission
<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/protections-at-work/protection-from-discrimination-at-work>
 - o Unfair dismissal
Fair Work Commission
<https://www.fwc.gov.au/termination-of-employment/unfair-dismissal>

- Fair Work Ombudsman
Promotes harmonious, productive and cooperative workplace relations, and ensures compliance with Australian workplace laws.
<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>
- Workplace discrimination
Chronic Illness Alliance
<http://www.chronicillness.org.au/workwelfarewills/workplace-discrimination/>



Telling your employer about your condition

When you have an invisible condition like arthritis or back pain, your employer and colleagues may not know that you have a musculoskeletal condition.

It's up to you whether you share this information.

Reasons to tell your employer about your condition

- Your condition has the potential to affect the safety and wellbeing of you, your workmates or others. For example if you drive a school bus, your ability to drive safely may be affected if your medications make you drowsy. In these situations, where your safety and that of others is at risk, disclosing your condition to your employer is an occupational health and safety (OHS) obligation. If you're unsure if your condition presents a workplace OHS risk, you should discuss this with your doctor, detailing your work environment and responsibilities.
- You're no longer able to perform your job's essential duties, or 'inherent requirements'. For example, if you work in a busy coffee shop and have arthritis in your hands and feet which make it extremely difficult to be on your feet for hours at a time, serving customers and clearing tables.
- You'd like to make some 'reasonable adjustments' to your work environment or work arrangements to help you stay at work. For example, using a sitting/standing desk, having the flexibility to work from home as needed, reducing your hours.
- You work in a supportive environment and know your workmates will assist you if needed.
- To protect your rights in case you need to make a legal complaint in the future, such as an unfair dismissal or discrimination complaint.

Reasons not to tell your employer about your condition

- Your condition has no impact on your ability to perform your job.
- You fear being discriminated against.
- You don't think your employer will be supportive.
- You value your privacy.
- You're concerned others may treat you differently.

If you choose to tell, what then?

Your condition may affect your ability to perform your duties safely or effectively from time to time.

If you find that aspects of your job are becoming difficult because of your condition, you can ask your employer to make 'reasonable adjustments' to your work environment or work arrangements so that you can continue to work productively.

For example, if you're required to take minutes at meetings, but it hurts your hands to do this, an option may be to use software that records and transcribes the meeting. Or if you have to stand for long periods at a cash register, but this makes your back ache, your employer can provide a stool or perch. Or if you're affected by morning stiffness you may be able to adjust your hours – so instead of working from 8am-4pm, you may work from 9.30am-5.30pm. These are reasonable adjustments.

Under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, your employer is required to make these reasonable adjustments. Failure to do so may be considered to be discrimination.

The Australian Government JobAccess website has resources to help you change aspects of your work environment such as your work area and methods, tasks, work times and working from home.

To help employers make these changes, there's financial assistance available through the Federal Government. Find out more.

It's important to be aware that in some cases, employers aren't required to make adjustments if they can show that the changes required would cause unjustifiable hardship. This includes being too expensive, difficult, time-consuming or the adjustments will cause other hardships to the business.

Your right to privacy

If you've told your employer about your condition, they're not allowed to share this information with anyone else unless you've given them written consent to do so. This includes staff working in human resources. Your information is confidential and is protected under the Privacy Act 1988.

Even if your employer is making adjustments to your work environment or conditions and requires someone else in the organisation to be involved – for example ordering new equipment for you – they still can't share your personal information. They simply need to ask for an adjustment to be made so that you can do your job.

Discrimination

If you feel that you're being discriminated against because you have a musculoskeletal condition, you have rights that protect you.

Under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992, the Fair Work Act 2009, and state and territory legislation, it's against the law to discriminate against someone with a disability.

The Disability Discrimination Act definition of 'disability' is broad to ensure everyone with a disability is protected. It includes physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological and learning disabilities. It also includes physical disfigurement and the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms, such as the HIV virus.

The Act covers disabilities that people have now, had in the past, may have in the future or are believed to have.

So you can see that musculoskeletal conditions are covered by the Act and that there are laws to protect you from discrimination.

What can you do if you're being discriminated against?

The first thing to do is to try to resolve the matter inside the workplace. Talk with the people involved, your manager and/or HR staff. If your workplace has a process for dealing with complaints, follow it.

It's also a good idea to keep a diary or write down any instances of discrimination, and save any emails or other correspondence that provides evidence of discrimination.

If you can't resolve the issue in this way, you can make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission. [Find out more.](#)

You can also speak with the Fairwork Ombudsman, your union or a lawyer who specialises in employment law. Check out [Your rights at work](#) (see page 16) for more info.

More to explore

- [Employment FAQs](#) - Musculoskeletal Australia and Maurice Blackburn
- [Best practice guide: The right to request flexible working arrangements](#) - Fair Work
- [Your workplace](#) - Job Access

Advice on modifying your work area, talking about your disability, negotiating flexible work arrangements and more.

- [Talking to others about your disability](#) - JobAccess



Returning to work

For many people, there comes a time when a break from work is necessary. Not for a holiday, but to get your musculoskeletal condition/s under control and your treatment plan back on track.

Some people only require a short period of time off work – a few days or a week; while others may need longer. Sometimes returning to work can be challenging.

This module will provide some tips and strategies to help you ease back into work after taking some time off to manage your health.

Work with your healthcare team. Keeping on top of your musculoskeletal condition/s is one of the most important things for returning to work and staying at work. Professionals such as your GP, specialist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, psychologist – or other professionals you work with - can help you. Together you can develop a plan that works for you, your condition/s, the type of work you do, your work environment and the hours you work.

For example, if you drive a delivery truck and have low back pain, your occupational therapist or physiotherapist may look at the cab of your truck to ensure your seat is adjusted correctly, or may give you advice on how to get in and out of the truck without straining your back. Your physiotherapist may give you some exercises and stretches that you can do throughout your day to strengthen your back and prevent muscle pain building up over the course of your workday.

Talk with your employer. This depends on whether or not you've told your employer about your condition (see page 12), or the reason you're taking time off. If you have informed them, it gives you the ability to openly discuss some of the issues you're experiencing at work as a result of your condition. Together you can explore whether making some reasonable adjustments to your job or work environment can prevent this from recurring.

Reasonable adjustments are changes to a work process, practice, procedure or environment that would enable you to do your job in a way that minimises the impact of your condition. This could include things such as: returning to work at reduced hours and increasing them over time, working from home when necessary, being provided with a sitting/standing desk or other ergonomic equipment, flexibility of hours to attend healthcare appointments.

Find out more about reasonable adjustments on the Australian Human Rights Commission website.

Look after yourself – at work and at home. Being proactive about looking after our health and wellbeing really pays off. It makes us feel our best, putting us in a better position to overcome challenges and work more productively.

And it's the simple things that we do every day that will make a difference...

So when you're at work, take your scheduled breaks. Eat a healthy lunch and snacks. Make sure you stay hydrated by drinking enough water. Take your medication as prescribed and do some simple exercises. Follow the plan you've developed with your healthcare team to help you stay at work. Finish work on time and leave your work at work...that means no checking emails or messages outside of work hours (unless it's absolutely essential).

When you're at home, exercise regularly, eat well, get a good night's sleep, enjoy time with family and friends, have fun. Try some mindfulness meditation, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation and other strategies to help keep your pain and stress in check. Avoid overindulging in alcohol and other drugs.

Pace yourself. It's a common trap that many of us fall into; as soon as we feel better, we push ourselves and do too much.

But by doing this, you run the risk of having a flare, or exacerbating your condition and ending up right where you started. To prevent this from occurring, you need to pace yourself. Here are some tips to help you pace yourself at work:

- At the beginning of each day, plan your tasks and activities, and prioritise them, with the most important and time-critical at the top of your list, and the least important at the bottom.
- Break jobs into smaller tasks. We often don't need to do everything in one go, but can do part of a job, move on to something else, then come back to it. That way you prevent overextending or tiring yourself.
- Work within your current limits, and build up your activity levels over time.
- Alternate physical jobs with less active ones.
- Don't overdo things on your good days.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Sometimes we all need a little help. And it's ok to ask for it. Most people are happy to help out, but we may be too shy or embarrassed to ask.

For example, if you need help moving a box from one place to another, but you can't lift the weight at the moment, ask a colleague to help you. Or if you're finding your job or work environment are aggravating your condition, talk with your employer about making some changes or adjustments.

If you're not comfortable asking for help at work, ask for help at home.

Getting some help doing household chores, the school run, getting groceries etc., can help you conserve your energy and prevent your pain and fatigue from worsening. This'll make home life more enjoyable because you're not exhausted or in pain, which will have a flow on effect to your work life.

Maintain a healthy work-life balance. Avoid doing work out of hours. That includes checking emails and all of the other communications that make our phones beep all the time. Have clear boundaries when it comes to your work and home life. You owe it to yourself and your family to have some downtime. You'll be much happier for it.

Take time off when you need it in the future. We live with chronic conditions that can be under control for a while when suddenly – BAM – you wake up feeling like a truck just hit you. When this happens, take time off if you need to. Looking after your health, and practising self-care means that you'll be more able to manage at work in the longer term.



Financial support is available

If your ability to work is impacted by your musculoskeletal condition, this can cause financial stress.

The good news is there are services to help people in these circumstances – whether it's for workplace modifications, financial assistance to retrain and learn new skills, or support if you have to reduce your hours or retire early due to your condition.

Note: While none of these services are perfect, they can provide you with support and resources to help you through this tough time.

Financial support to help you at work

JobAccess is the Australian Government's one-stop-shop for information and resources for people with disability, employers and service providers. Find out about workplace modifications and assessments, wage subsidies, productivity payments, running your own business and workplace support.

Funding for changes to the workplace

The Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) – provides financial help to eligible people with disability and mental health conditions and employers to buy work related modifications, equipment, workplace assistance and support services. [Learn more about EAF.](#)

Income support

Info about financial support while you look for work including Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance and Disability Support Pension. [Learn more about income support.](#)

Subsidised wages for people with disability

Wage subsidies may be available to employers to help them take on people with disability in a new job. [Learn more about wage subsidies.](#)

Wages based on productivity

The Supported Wage System (SWS) provides job opportunities for people with disability. Wages are linked to the workers level of productivity. This level is determined by an independent assessor, not the employer. [Learn more about SWS.](#)

Support from Centrelink

[Learn more](#) about how Centrelink can help you with financial assistance and other services.

Support to develop your employment skills

A range of government programs to support you in developing your skills and finding a new job. [Learn more.](#)

Support to do an apprenticeship

Disabled Australian Apprenticeship Wage Support (DAAWS) provides a payment to employers of eligible Australian apprentices with disability. [Learn more about DAAWS.](#)

Support at work

A range of programs and incentives to help people with disability find, keep and change jobs. Some are designed specifically for people with disability, while other programs are available to the wider community, but may be especially helpful to people with disability who are looking for work. [Learn more.](#)

Financial support for life in general

Apart from income support and assistance to help pay for workplace modifications and training, there are a lot of other support services to help you if you're experiencing financial stress and can't pay your ongoing living costs such as your mortgage/rent, medical, utility or school bills. Read our information on [financial support](#) to learn more.

There are also some other options that may help you through this stressful time, including:

- [accessing your superannuation early](#)
- [income protection or Total and permanent disability \(TPD\) insurance through your super](#)
- accessing the [Disability Support Pension](#) or the [Age Pension](#).

Looking after your mental health

We all have times when we feel stressed, anxious, depressed, bewildered, angry, frustrated and a whole host of other emotions.

These emotions are valid and important, but when we start feeling them more regularly and for longer periods, they can be bad for us. That's why it's essential to know how to manage these feelings and look after our mental health.

Because when you have good mental health, you're more able to cope with the challenges life throws at you. You'll feel more resilient, optimistic, and you'll work more productively.

Here are some practical things you can do to look after your mental health – both at home and at work.

Create a routine - This will obviously depend on your work, your work environment, what you need to do in your day, if you have people depending on you, deadlines etc. But if you don't already have a workday routine, it's a useful way to stay on track at work and help you get through all the things you need to do. This is important for meeting your work commitments, but it will make you feel accomplished, which is a great boost for our mental health.

- First, start with your hours. Write them down.
- Next, write down all the things you need to do in your day. Rank them from the most important to the least.
- Now consider your energy and concentration levels. Do you work best in the morning, mid-day or afternoon? If you can, schedule time to do the tasks that require you to be focused when you know you'll be at your best physically and mentally.
- Tick things off or draw a line through them when they're complete. It's incredibly satisfying to see and do this.
- If there are things you didn't get done, consider the causes and come up with potential solutions. Was the cause outside of your control, e.g. an unexpected meeting? Or did you have too much on your schedule? Or was fatigue the problem? Once you identify the issue (if there was one) you can then do some problem-solving and come up with potential solutions.

Know your limits - It's easy when you're feeling great and pain-free to overdo things. Or when you're feeling unwell or stressed, to put things off. The problem with both of these tactics - particularly in a work situation - is that it's very easy to become overwhelmed. When you do too much – you can end up paying for it in the coming days with increased pain and fatigue. When you put things off, work starts piling up and before you know it, you have a mountain of work with deadlines fast approaching.

So the best approach is to know your limits – and work steadily and effectively within these limits and the work routine you've developed.

Talk with your employer - If you're finding your work tasks or deadlines are causing you stress, frustration or anxiety, speak with your employer. Before you meet, write down the issues, and some possible solutions. This will make you feel more prepared and confident when you meet.

Know your rights - Discrimination against workers is illegal in Australia. An employer (or other employees) cannot discriminate against workers based on physical or mental disability. Being discriminated against is stressful and can have a negative effect on mental health.

You don't have to put up with discrimination – there are things you can do to address it. They include talking with Human Resources, contacting your union for information and support, or contacting the Fair Work Ombudsman. [Find out about workplace discrimination.](#)

Work-life balance - Having a good balance between our work and our personal life makes life more satisfying and fulfilling. When we don't have a good balance, and work starts to take over our time, it can significantly impact our mental health. Learn more about work-life balance, including tips on achieving this balance, from [Healthdirect](#).

Get some sleep - We often struggle with sleep at the best of times because of chronic pain. Unfortunately, anxiety and stress can make this worse. But we need to do all we can to get some decent sleep each night, so we have the energy and stamina for the coming day. If sleep is a problem for you, check out our [tips for getting a good night's sleep](#). And if it's becoming a serious problem, speak to your doctor.

Exercise regularly - We've talked, and will continue to talk about the importance of [regular exercise and staying active](#). It helps us sleep better, maintain our weight, manage our pain, reduce our risk of developing other health conditions, and improve our mood. There's very clear evidence that regular exercise reduces stress, anxiety and feelings of depression and boosts our self-esteem. So make sure you're getting enough exercise every day.

Eat well - Food is a comfort to us all...and when we're feeling a bit lost, sad or anxious, many of us reach for the unhealthy foods that give us a quick sugar rush and make us feel happy. But this rush is generally short lived and can cause other health issues if consumed too often. So it's important to [eat a balanced diet](#) and [drink enough water](#) each day. It'll provide you with better energy levels, help to maintain your weight, and give you a greater sense of wellbeing.

Be careful with alcohol and other drugs - Drugs can negatively affect our mental health, and can increase feelings of anxiety and depression. If you think you're using them too often, or you're worried about their hold on you, talk with your doctor. And read this information from Beyond Blue: [Drugs, alcohol and mental health](#).

Get help when you need it - This may be psychological help if you feel like you're not coping emotionally, financial help if you're worried about your money situation or legal help if you have some concerns about your employment rights. Getting expert advice can help relieve some anxiety.



Support for changing jobs

Some people find that no matter how many accommodations or adjustments they make in their job, they're no longer able to perform their work duties to the level that's required. Or the job has become too taxing on their body, causing constant pain, fatigue and stress.

This can be a devastating blow, especially if it's a job that you love. It can also be an extremely scary time as you contemplate a new future, with a different job.

The good news is that there are resources and organisations to help you through this process.

Your Career

This website is a good place to start when contemplating your next career move.

It has a number of helpful tools and resources including:

- Your options now - this tool helps you find occupations that:
 - have local vacancies
 - match your current qualifications
 - use similar skills
- Your future career - this tool provides a series of questions to create a list of occupations tailored to your interests and needs, such as being creative, working with people etc. It also has questions relating to working conditions that don't suit you, such as physically demanding, stressful, irregular hours etc.
- Resources - articles and other resources that provide career guidance for young people and adults.

JobAccess

JobAccess is the Australian Government's one-stop-shop for information and resources for people with disability, employers and service providers.

The section for people with a disability has a wealth of resources, especially on the Available Support page including:

- resources on finding or changing jobs - with lots of information on looking for work, applying for a job, interviews and more.
- financial support - including income support while you look for work.
- training and development - resources to help you develop your skills, find training courses, get work experience and more.
- disability employment services - the Australian Government employment service for people with disability, injury or a health condition.
- current vacancies - search for work through a range of websites including jobactive.
- videos of real life stories.

Australian Job Search

Australian Job Search is Australia's largest free online jobs website. Lots of useful info and resources for job seekers.

Job Jumpstart

Job Jumpstart provides articles and tools to help you find jobs that suit your interests. Information is tailored to your stage of life:

- at school
- looking for a job
- on a gap year
- at uni or in training
- just graduated
- already working

Department of Education, Skills and Employment

The Australian Government, Department of Education, Skills and Employment, provides information and support to help you with training and learning new skills.

- Career Transition Assistance – designed to help people over the age of 45 build their confidence and skills when it comes to finding a job, and becoming more competitive in their local labour market.
- Help with the cost of training – find out if you're eligible for free or subsidised training.
- Skills and Training Incentive – for people aged 45-70 years of age, it provides up to \$2,200 to jointly fund training to help you remain in the workforce longer.

My Skills

My Skills is an Australian Government initiative that lets you search for, and compare, nationally recognised training courses and providers.

Careers counsellors

You can also get professional help making decisions about your career choice by talking to a careers counsellor. They provide information, advice and guidance to help you make realistic choices about work, including further training or upskilling. They can help you identify jobs that match your skills and interests, create a resume, provide info on where to look for jobs and more.

Visit Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA) to find a private career counsellor who can help you work out your best career options. Note – these services aren't free. The CDAA advises that *'all members are in business, they charge a fee for the services they provide. You are encouraged to contact 2-3 members and discuss your needs to make an informed decision about who could help you best.'*

Is it time to stop working?

You may have come to a point in your working life where you feel like you can't do it anymore.

You can't perform your work duties, even after making adjustments to when or how you work (see page 12). Or the job has become too taxing on your body, causing constant pain, fatigue and stress.

This can be extremely upsetting, especially if it's a job that you love. It can also be a scary time as you contemplate a new future.

If you've investigated and rejected the possibility of reducing your hours or changing jobs (see page 32), stopping work or retiring early may be an option.

This is a very big step, so before you make a final decision, you need to consider several factors:

Your condition

Has your condition become increasingly worse, making work impossible? Or are you going through a particularly bad period at the moment?

If it's the latter, taking time off so you can rest, recover and get on top of your condition, could help in staying at work into the future. It's easier to get back into the workforce after taking a break, than it is if you become unemployed. So if you need some time to get your condition under control, talk with your employer about scheduling some time off.

Make sure you talk with your doctor and a physical therapist (e.g. occupational therapist, physiotherapist), about your condition, symptoms and how they're affecting you at work. There may be options you haven't yet explored to help you stay at work.

Your finances

This is a crucial consideration. Can you afford to stop working?

What are your options? Can you access your superannuation? Do you have enough savings to live on? Is income protection or Total and permanent disability (TPD) insurance through your super an option? Or are you eligible for a Disability Support Pension or the Age Pension?

When you're thinking about your finances for your future, you need to consider not only your general living costs (e.g. food, utilities, mortgage/rent, car), but also any outstanding debts that you have, ongoing healthcare costs, the lifestyle you want to live, as well as fun things such as entertainment and travel.

Working out your finances can be a complicated, so it may be helpful to talk with a licensed financial adviser to make sense of it all.

The Australian Government website *MoneySmart* has some information to help you choose a financial adviser who meets your needs. MoneySmart also has a lot of useful information to help you make your money go the distance in retirement.

The National Debt Helpline is another great resource. They provide free, confidential financial counselling, as well as lots of useful info on their website about your financial rights, and solutions to help you manage debt. Call them weekdays on 1800 007 007.

Your reasons for working

We work for so many reasons (see page 10), and getting paid is a big one. But working also gives us the opportunity to contribute to society, feel a sense of accomplishment, learn new skills and meet and interact with other people.

After retiring from the workforce, it's common for people to feel a little lost, especially at first. So it's important to think of other ways you can get these benefits associated with working.

They may include:

- volunteer work – find a local charity or cause that you find interesting and investigate volunteering with them. There are so many different ways you can volunteer and contribute to your community. Check out the GoVolunteer website for volunteer opportunities.
- make time for family and friends – without work getting in the way, there's more time for those closest to us. Visit people you haven't seen for a while, provide care for an elderly relative, give your partner and immediate family the time and attention they deserve. This time can be an invaluable gift – enjoy it.
- mentoring – after working most of our lives, we have a lot of knowledge, experience and skills we can pass on to others. Investigate opportunities to mentor through professional or industry bodies, your local neighbourhood house, school, Men's Shed, or search online.
- hobbies – often the busyness of life prevents us from pursuing our hobbies. But if you suddenly have more time on your hands, this is the perfect time to get back to them. Bushwalking, writing, stamp collecting, photography, woodworking, belly dancing, home brewing, painting, origami, bee keeping, flying – the sky really is the limit! Make it a social activity by connecting with others (in person or online) who share your passions.
- local exercise and sporting groups – look after your physical and mental wellbeing by joining your local swimming/bowls/water exercise/walking/football group.
- be your own boss – depending on your skills and interests, you may be able to do some work from home that provides a source of income, and keeps your mind engaged. An advantage of being self-employed is that you can fit your work around your lifestyle and your condition.

Having to finish work earlier than you'd planned can be a frightening and overwhelming time. But it also has the potential to be exciting as new opportunities present themselves. So take your time and get all the facts you need, so that you can make a careful and measured decision about your future.

More to explore

These links and resources will provide you with many of the tips and tools you need to get back to work, change careers, manage your condition at work and so much more.

Work and career resources

Work Assist – Australian Government

Work Assist can help you stay in work if you risk losing your job through illness, injury or disability.

Your Career

This website is a good place to start when contemplating your next career move.

It has a number of helpful tools and resources including:

- Your options now - this tool helps you find occupations that:
 - * have local vacancies
 - * match your current qualifications
 - * use similar skills
- Your future career – this tool provides a series of questions to create a list of occupations tailored to your interests and needs, such as being creative, working with people etc. It also has questions relating to working conditions that don't suit you, such as physically demanding, stressful, irregular hours etc.
- Resources – articles and other resources that provide career guidance for young people and adults.

JobAccess - Access for People with Disability - Australian Government

JobAccess is the Australian Government's one-stop-shop for information and resources for people with disability, employers and service providers.

The section for people with a disability has a wealth of resources, especially on the Available Support page including:

- resources on finding or changing jobs
- financial support
- training and development
- disability employment services
- current vacancies
- videos of real life stories
- Employment Assistance Fund (EAF).

FairWork Ombudsman

- [Best practice guide: The right to request flexible working arrangements](#)
- [Difficult conversations in the workplace](#)

Australian Job Search – Australian Government

This is Australia's largest free online jobs website. Lots of useful info and resources for job seekers.

Job Jumpstart – Australian Government

Provides articles and tools to help you find jobs that suit your interests

Department of Education, Skills and Employment – Australian Government

- [Career Transition Assistance](#) – is designed to help people over the age of 45 build their confidence and skills when it comes to finding a job, and becoming more competitive in their local labour market.
- [Can I get help to pay for my training?](#) – find out if you're eligible for free or subsidised training.
- [Skills and Training Incentive](#) – is for people aged 45-70 years of age. It provides up to \$2,200 to jointly fund training to help you remain in the workforce longer.

My Skills – Australian Government

My Skills is the national directory of vocational education and training (VET) organisations and courses.

Musculoskeletal conditions

For more information about your condition, managing your symptoms and treatment options, visit:

Musculoskeletal Australia

- Contact our free national Help Line weekdays on 1800 263 265 or email helpline@msk.org.au

Versus Arthritis (UK)

- [Work](#)

Arthritis Foundation (US)

- [Working when you have arthritis](#)

Arthritis Ireland

- [Working and arthritis](#)

Treatment options

Online health services directory

- Healthdirect - [Find a service](#)
- Musculoskeletal Australia – [Find a health professional](#)

Online information about different diagnostic procedures available

- [Choosing Wisely](#)
- [Lab Tests Online](#)

Personal support

- [Beyond Blue](#)
 - o [Eight tips for looking after your mental health through unemployment](#)
- [Black Dog Institute](#)
- [Embrace: Multicultural Mental Health](#)
- [Lifeline](#)



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We would like to thank the following people for their contributions to WorkWise:

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Centre for Ergonomics and Human Factors, LaTrobe University
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