

Statement of Fitness for Work (fit note)

The fit note replaces the sick note. It is the form that we will give you when your health affects your ability to work.

Replacing the sick note

What has changed?

The fit note allows us to provide you with more information on how your condition affects your ability to work. This will help your employer to understand how they might be able to help you return to work sooner.

The changes mean that we can:

- advise when you may be fit for work with some support
- suggest common ways to help you return to work
- give information on how your condition will affect what you can do

What stays the same?

The fit note can still be used as evidence for why you cannot work due to illness or an injury. You still won't need the fit note as evidence until after your seventh calendar day of sickness.

If you need to apply for benefit the rules and processes have not changed. If we recommend that you 'may be fit for work' you can still apply for benefit.

The requirements for the payment of Statutory Sick Pay have not changed. If we recommend that you 'may be fit for work', and you and your employer agree that you should remain off work, you should still get Statutory Sick Pay.

Understanding your fit note

When we provide you with a fit note we will advise you on one of two options. Either you will be 'not fit for work' or you 'may be fit for work'.

'Not fit for work'

We will choose this option when we believe that your health condition will prevent you from working for a stated period of time.

'May be fit for work'

We will choose this option when we believe that you may be able to return to work while you recover with some help from your employer.

We may include some comments which will help your employer understand how you are affected by your condition. If appropriate, we can also suggest one or more common ways to help you return to work.

This could include:

- a phased return to work - where you may benefit from a gradual increase in your work duties or working hours, for example after an operation or after injury
- altered hours - allowing you the flexibility to start or leave later, for example if you struggle travelling in the 'rush hour'
- amended duties - to take into account your condition, for example removing heavy lifting if you have had a back injury
- changes to your workplace - to take into account your condition, for example allowing you to work on the ground floor if you have problems going up and down stairs

Discussing your fit note with your employer

If we indicate that you 'may be fit for work', the fit note will give your employer the information needed to begin a discussion on whether you can return to work.

If it is possible for you to return to work, agree:

- how this will happen
- what support you will receive and for how long
- how your pay may be affected if you return to work on different hours or duties

Sometimes it may not be possible for your employer to make the changes required to help you return to work. If this is the case, you will not be able to return to work until you have further recovered. You can use the statement as if we had advised you were 'not fit to work'. You will **not** need to see your doctor for a new fit note.

Disagreements with your employer about returning to work

If you do not agree with your employer on when and how you will return to work, you should explain to them why you disagree. There may be issues which your employer was not aware of when they made their decision.

If you are a member of a trade union you may want to ask your union representative to help you with this conversation. Alternatively, you might want to seek support from a local advice centre, for example a Citizens Advice Bureau.

If your employer requires more information about your health to make a decision about your fitness to work he can write to us with your consent requesting more information. We will charge your employer for this report.

(Adapted from http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Employees/Sicknessabsence/DG_187161)

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