

A supportive back pain policy

Purpose of the Back Pain Policy

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the company's absence policy and is supplemental to it. The purpose of the policy is to deal with the specific problems of back pain and to help employees alleviate problems both within and outside of the workplace. It is also the policy of the company to encourage employees to take better care of their backs.

Background

Back pain is too common in the UK. Sedentary lifestyles and poor understanding of our bodies' are major factors in the cause of the pain. However there are some simple things that the sufferer can do to help reduce or prevent back pain. Medical experts are now quite clear that you need to be ProActive to beat back pain. It is not enough only to simply avoid hazardous activities at work.

Your back is one of the strongest parts of your body. It is constructed of bony blocks (vertebrae). These blocks are joined together with small discs and supported by very strong ligaments and muscles. Like other muscles groups, your back needs exercise to keep it fit and supple. If you do not keep your back fit and ready for action (whether at home or at work) it will become out of condition and more likely to become strained and give problems when asked to perform activities such as lifting or twisting.

The company is committed to maintaining a safe working environment with safe working practices. However it also expects employees to take responsibility for their own fitness to work. A bout of back pain may be the first indication of a lack of fitness/back care awareness and should provide an indication to the sufferer of the need to take steps to avoid further recurrences.

Objectives

The purpose of this policy is:

- To help prevent both short and long term disability due to back pain.
- To assist wherever possible employees suffering with back pain with appropriate support.

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- To encourage greater awareness of back fitness awareness by employees.
- To consider reasonable temporary adaptations to working practices to assist employees with an early return to work following a bout of back pain.
- To offer at the employer's discretion assessment and or treatment to assist return to work and/or received expert advice on activity modifications.
- To ensure that employees prevented from safely performing usual duties at work are aware of their responsibility to advise their manager accordingly.
- To help prevent injury at work.
- To ensure that employees are aware that their health and well-being is of concern to their employer.
- To deter inappropriate absence.
- To help prevent recurrences of the complaint and future absences from work.

Offer of rehabilitation to employees

- Lack of the correct early strategy in back pain is often attributable to the problem becoming chronic. For this reason the company wishes to ensure that employees are provided with advice and support to help prevent prolonged and unnecessary pain and suffering and absence from work. The advice and support is not intended to be in place of NHS and GP lead treatment but to support it.
- The company places importance upon maintaining contact with employees absent from work. The company is receptive to consideration of temporary measures that may be required to enable employees to return to work, even if they are still suffering with some restrictions.
- Employees are expected to make reasonable efforts to comply with the recommended advice for back pain provided by the Health and Safety Executive and Royal College of GPs for dealing with and recovering from back pain, in order to minimise the impact of the back pain upon their ability to work.

Procedures

- Employees shall notify their manager or appointed contact person at commencement of working day/shift if they are unable to attend work.
- The employee shall advise the employer of their current condition, ability to work and their anticipated return to work date.
- The employer at their discretion shall consider offering a pro-active support programme to assist the employee with early recovery and self-management of their back pain
- The employer shall consider reasonable adaptations and modifications to working practices and methods to enable the employee to return or continue to work.
- The employee shall accept the employer's reasonable offer of rehabilitation support. Such support may be offered in accordance with Health and Safety Executive recommendations.