

# WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH ARTHRITIS



Not everyone with arthritis will require workplace accommodations, but for those who do, having support can significantly improve employment outcomes and reduce job disruptions. With the right supports in place, people with arthritis can continue to make meaningful contributions at work and lead productive, fulfilling lives.

## ABOUT ARTHRITIS

Nearly 6 million Canadians, or 1 in 5 people, have arthritis. Arthritis is a term used to describe over 100 diseases that involve inflammation in the joints or other areas of the body. Arthritis symptoms can range from mild to severe and can vary day to day. Many people with arthritis experience chronic pain, fatigue, restricted mobility, lowered mood and other symptoms that can impact their quality of life.

## ACCOMMODATION MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE

There are numerous reasons why providing supports for employees with arthritis makes good business sense. Emerging research points to benefits in accommodating employees, which can:

- ✓ Increase employee productivity and attendance
- ✓ Reduce economic loss due to absences and long-term disability
- ✓ Reduce turnover costs and retain skilled employees
- ✓ Avoid employee grievances or human rights complaints
- ✓ Increase overall company morale and productivity

## KNOW THE LAW

In addition to providing organizational benefits, accommodation is also the law. In Canada, employers have a duty to accommodate individuals with disabilities and chronic health conditions like arthritis. As the Supreme Court of Canada explains, "The purpose of the duty to accommodate is to ensure that persons who are otherwise fit for work are not unfairly excluded where working conditions can be adjusted without undue hardship."

## STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL ACCOMMODATION

Creating and implementing an accommodation plan is a collaborative effort between the employer and employee, with the goal of keeping your employee active and productive at work:

- 1** Assess the employee's work strengths and disability-related limitations in relation to job demands and job performance. Appropriate accommodations will depend on an individual's specific needs.
- 2** Identify accommodation needs and options, then develop an accommodation plan with the employee. Some information may need to be communicated to co-workers, but it's important to respect the privacy of your employee and only share what is necessary.
- 3** Determine a follow-up process to monitor and evaluate accommodations and assess whether additional accommodations are required.

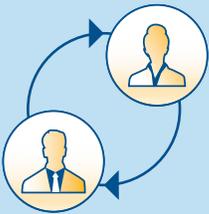
# Possible Accommodation Options for Employees with Arthritis

## SCHEDULING ACCOMMODATIONS



- **Flex time:** Changing or varying normal work hours or work days
- **Compressed work week:** Increasing the number of hours in a work day and decreasing the number of work days in a week
- **Job sharing:** Sharing the responsibilities, hours and salary of at least one full-time job between two employees
- **Alternate location:** Working from home or other location for all or a portion of the work week
- **More frequent breaks:** Taking shorter, more frequent breaks rather than one longer break

## MODIFYING OR RESTRUCTURING DUTIES



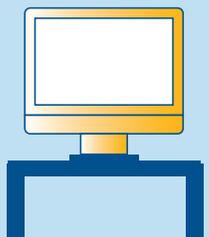
- Changing the pace or the physical requirements of work
- Re-arranging high- and low-concentration tasks according to changes in employee's energy level
- Trading less suitable tasks with coworkers for other, more suitable tasks
- Delegating components of an employee's job to coworkers

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



- Ergonomic assessment and workstation adjustment
- Relocation of workstation: Moving an employee's workstation closer to a break room, restroom, office equipment, employee parking lot, or to a more accessible area or work site
- Increasing accessibility of workplace, including easy-grip handles or automatic doors, raised toilet seats, elevators or ramps, railings, etc.

## ASSISTIVE DEVICES



- Ergonomic equipment such as monitor risers, chairs, alternative keyboards, or foot rests
- Telephone headsets or a speaker phone
- Grip aids to attach to handles, door knobs or keys
- Lifting aids for heavy materials, document/book holders
- Speech-recognition software
- Sit/stand work stations

## POLICIES & PROCEDURES



- Reimbursement of prescribed arthritis treatments and services on extended benefit plan
- Paid sick days and time off for appointments, short- and long-term disability benefits
- Access to employee counselling

Reviewed by: Dr. Monique Gignac at the Institute for Work and Health, as well as the Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance (CAPA)