

# ARTHRITIS AND WORK CHECKLISTS

How to deal with arthritis and persistent musculoskeletal disorders in the work place: A guide for employers, employees and health-care providers

**These checklists will help make arthritis and persistent musculoskeletal disorders a regular conversation topic between employers, employees and their health-care providers.**

## Guiding Factors

The checklists are based on these six factors:

1. Anyone living with arthritis can work at nearly any type of job, although sometimes specific adjustments are helpful.
2. Work provides purpose, socialization and potentially greater wellbeing, in addition to an income. This can positively impact individuals, their families, their employers and society as well.
3. According to the United Nations, meaningful employment is a human right. In Canada, about 90% of employees are protected by provincial or territorial employment laws.
4. Maintaining employment, job reinstatement and planning are shared responsibilities between employers and employees, and, where relevant, unions and insurance companies and/or provincial/territorial employee compensation programs.
5. Early clinical interventions that prioritize the importance of work are important to the employee's return to the job.
6. Work is a key aspect of clinical care and approach to treatment.

## About the Arthritis and Work Checklists

These checklists were developed through a multidisciplinary approach with the cooperation of various stakeholders. Employee and employer are at the core, but they extend to health-care providers, occupational health/human resources, insurance providers, unions, etc. For ease of use, the checklists for all stakeholders are compiled in one publication. Reflected in the design is the fact that not all employees have access to all involved stakeholders.

## Regulations and Employment Law

In Canada work is governed by Federal and Provincial/Territorial laws and regulations.

“What employment rights are protected by employment standards legislation?”

Employment standards legislation covers rights in areas such as hours of work and overtime pay, minimum wage, pay, vacation time and vacation pay, public holidays, coffee and meal breaks, pregnancy leave and parental leave, personal emergency leave, family medical leave, termination notice and termination pay.<sup>1</sup>

“Do all employees have the same employment rights?”

No. Some categories of employees may be subject to a variation in the employment standard or excluded from one or more of the laws. For example, farm employees may be paid a piece rate instead of a minimum wage, and in most provinces they are not eligible for overtime or public holiday pay. Other categories of employees that could have different employment rights include commercial fishers, oil field employees, loggers, home care givers, professionals, managers and some categories of salespersons.<sup>2</sup>

For more on provincial/territorial laws relating to work, contact your labour ministry via [www.labour.gc.ca/eng/regulated.shtml](http://www.labour.gc.ca/eng/regulated.shtml).

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada, Workers Rights in Canada, December 2007; sourced on July 22, 2014 from [http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/about/publication/workers\\_rights.shtml](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/about/publication/workers_rights.shtml)

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada, Workers Rights in Canada, December 2007; sourced on July 22, 2014 from [http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/about/publication/workers\\_rights.shtml](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/about/publication/workers_rights.shtml)

# CHECKLIST EMPLOYEE

- Try to keep working, if not full-time, as many hours as you are able.
- You are not legally obligated to disclose health conditions, however, being open about your condition has shown to help people remain actively employed. Consider your options.
- Be open about your condition and discuss your strengths and limitations and how to keep you working productively.
- Discuss with your health-care providers how your condition may affect your ability work and your expectations about working.
- Discuss with your health-care providers how your treatments may impact your ability to work, including any side effects of medications that affect alertness.
- You may ask your employer's occupational health/human resource staff to contact your health-care providers to discuss the above. (This requires your consent.)
- Upon return to work, with or without restrictions, make sure work demands fit your abilities. Discuss the type, pacing and scheduling of work with both your health-care provider and employer. Try not to overexert yourself.
- When unable to work, maintain contact with your employer. Clarify what will be communicated to staff during your leave and how to stay in touch with colleagues if you wish.
- Make every effort to improve/maintain joint health — including remaining physically active, which is important to keep joints healthy, manage pain, limit fatigue and improve your mental outlook. Set up an exercise plan with your health-care provider.



The Arthritis Society has been setting lives in motion for over 70 years. Dedicated to a vision of living well while creating a future without arthritis, The Society is Canada's principal health charity providing education, programs and support to the over 4.6 million Canadians living with arthritis. Since its founding in 1948, The Society has been the largest non-government funder of arthritis research in Canada, investing nearly \$190 million in projects that have led to breakthroughs in the diagnosis, treatment and care of people with arthritis. The Arthritis Society is accredited under Imagine Canada's Standards Program. For more information and to make a donation, visit [arthritis.ca](http://arthritis.ca).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SUPPORTED BY:

abbvie

