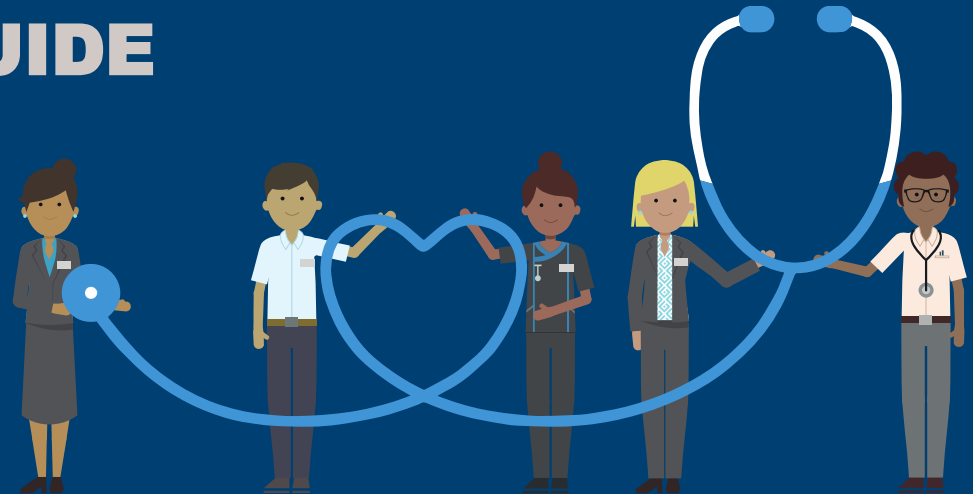


Employee Wellbeing

RETURN TO WORK GUIDE



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- It is not just our employees' physical wellbeing that we need to take into account when they return to work after Covid-19 leave. Equally important is how we respond to their **emotional and psychological needs**.
- The RTW phase should be carefully handled because even brief periods away from work, have been shown to have effects in terms of employees' sense of connection and comfort about what they will be returning to.
- Avoidance behaviours are common, including staff not wishing to treat highly infectious patients, absenteeism, avoiding crowded places and so on.
- An effective RTW orientation can support their re-entry back into their teams and mitigate possible negative mental health impacts.



SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES

IN QUARANTINE OR BOOKED OFF ON COVID19 SICK LEAVE

- Encourage them stay in touch with their teams and to keep in contact with friends and family.
- Suggest they temporarily “disconnect” from the hospital news WhatsApp group while on leave
- Send them encouraging messages or a **We Care e-card** via WhatsApp/ SMS.
- Address guilt about leaving work ‘shorthanded’ and concerns over how they may be perceived by other staff members. Reinforce the altruism of their isolation.
- Offer phone/online support: [click here](#) for the list of available support helplines.
- Consider putting them in touch with a ‘survivor’ peer supporter they can relate to.



WELCOMING EMPLOYEES BACK TO WORK

Make sure you have all your bases covered when welcoming employees back to work:

THE DAY BEFORE

- Consider putting a small “care pack” together for them (access a **Welcome Back e-card** [here](#))
- Inform team members of their return. Accentuate the positive and allay any fears that arise regarding the employee’s return to work. For tips on **dealing with social stigma related to COVID-19**, click [here](#).
- If possible, organise a “buddy” to help orient them back to work.

For Unit Managers specifically:

As soon as you have a return-to-work date, contact Nicolette Smuts, Snr Organisational Effectiveness Specialist, to arrange a 20-30 minute “back on track” coaching conversation. This needs to take place within the first week of their return to work.



WELCOMING EMPLOYEES BACK TO WORK

FIRST DAY BACK

Arrange a private RTW meeting with the returning employee.

Reminders about Return to Work Practices:

Take a few minutes to remind the returning employee about the Mediclinic return to work practices they need to keep in mind and handle any administrative tasks.

Show Support for their Wellbeing:

Build some time into the RTW discussion to address the following key elements:

Offer emotional support: let employees know they are cared for and appreciated:

Communicate that you know it is a stressful and worrying time and remind them that it's okay (and perfectly normal) to be feeling anxious about returning to work.



WELCOMING EMPLOYEES BACK TO WORK

Encourage sharing – ask them about their experience:

Show empathy and compassion by creating a safe space for employees to feel heard. They may want to share their personal story with you.

If so, here are some questions they may respond well to:

- *What did you learn about yourself and how you responded to being ill with the virus?*
- *Was there anything particularly hard about your personal circumstances? How did you overcome it?*
- *What have you learned from the experience?*
- *Who were your biggest supporters while you were off sick? How can you thank them?*
- *What are you grateful for?*

Encourage self-care:

Remind them of the importance of self-care and prompt them to empower themselves with tools and techniques that can help them manage their wellbeing.

Try to check in on the newly returned employee at least once during their shift.

Are they coping? What additional support do they require?



ADDITIONAL TIPS AND RESOURCES

Model self-care. Remember that you can be most effective in your role when you are managing your own personal wellbeing. **Self-care is not selfish; it is productive and necessary.**

- A tool to [keep perspective](#) – a thinking tool about what you can and cannot control
- [Mindfulness explained](#) plus a how-to video and audio mindfulness meditation guides
- [Relaxing breathing](#) infographic
- [“Self Care is Never Selfish”](#) article plus a great how-to-relax video

Reiterate that the safety of our employees during the pandemic is a priority. Remind them where they can access helpful guides, videos and other resources (e.g. donning and doffing video)

Ensure open communication channels. Have an open-door policy or create “consultation hours” where you block out time for employees to touch base and connect with you.

To access the full Care.Courage.Compassion. resource hub, click [here](#)

