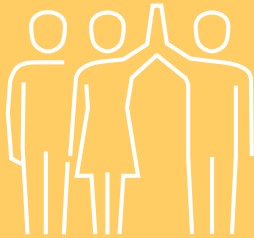


TO THOSE OF YOU WITH A **COLLEAGUE**
WHO HAS, OR HAS HAD, CANCER



YOUR COLLEAGUE
IS RETURNING TO WORK

When a colleague is diagnosed with cancer, knowing how to offer support can be challenging. This leaflet provides guidance on how to assist your colleague during their sick leave and as they transition back to work.

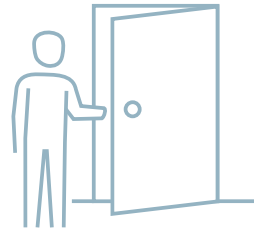
It might be challenging for your colleague to return to work

Returning to work after a serious illness like cancer can be difficult for your colleague. A cancer diagnosis often disrupts daily life and has far-reaching effects on physical, emotional, and existential well-being.

Cancer and its treatment can lead to both immediate and long-term side effects. Even after being declared cancer-free, many individuals may still face challenges that impact their ability to work, some of which may not be immediately visible.

Side effects: These are typically temporary and may resolve over a period of months or years.

Late effects: These can either emerge during treatment and become chronic or develop months or years after treatment has ended. Consequently, some individuals may encounter new late effects and challenges once they return to work.



Common side and late effects:

- Memory and concentration issues
- Fatigue
- Sleep disturbances
- Difficulty maintaining focus
- Sensory disturbances
- Increased sensitivity
- Anxiety and depression
- Pain

How you can help and support your colleague

Be patient

Understand that your colleague's return to full-time work may take several weeks or even months.

Engage in open discussions about task management

Coordinate with your manager regarding any tasks that remain unaddressed during your colleague's absence. It is management's responsibility to redistribute tasks during sick leave and upon your colleague's return.

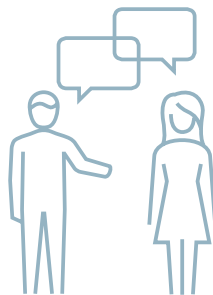
Designate a point of contact

Select a colleague to act as the primary contact for the employee on sick leave. This can help facilitate communication and support.

Discuss preferences

For contact during sick leave

Clarify how your colleague prefers to stay in touch while they are away. What type of contact do they want, and how frequently? Would they like to be invited to social gatherings? Keep in mind that their preferences may change over time, so be prepared to adjust expectations accordingly.



Recognize professional skills and competencies

Remember that your colleague possesses valuable professional skills and knowledge despite their illness. Acknowledging their expertise can greatly enhance their sense of worth in the workplace.

Avoid comparisons with other's illnesses

With over 100 different types of cancer, each person's experience—along with their treatment and reactions—can vary significantly. If your colleague wishes to share their experience, listen attentively, but refrain from sharing medical stories about your own family and friends.

3 Tips for talking to your colleague

1 Be curious and discuss the desire to talk about the illness

Initiate a dialogue with your colleague. Clarify whether they want to discuss their illness or prefer not to. Some may appreciate having a space away from their condition while at work. Keep in mind that their preferences can change over time, so continue the conversation periodically.

2 Be yourself

Don't worry about saying the wrong thing; simply talk to your colleague as you normally would.

3 Ask how you can help

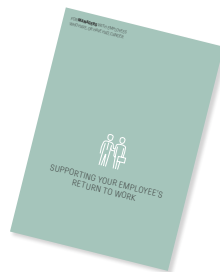
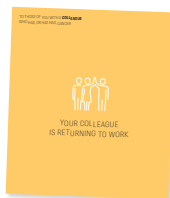
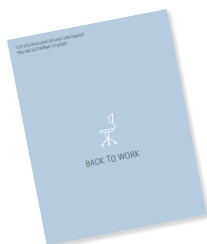
It can be challenging to know how to assist. Ask your colleague how you can help, ideally with specific suggestions. If they decline your offer, accept it without taking it personally. Even if your help is not needed at the moment, don't withdraw; their need for assistance may change.

Want to know more or need assistance?

- Your immediate manager
- The HR department at your workplace
- Sundhed.dk
- The Association of Late Effects (Senfølgerforeningen)
- The Cancer Line (Kræftlinjen)

REHPA

Videncenter for
Rehabilitering og Palliation



This leaflet is part of a series that includes two additional leaflets: one for your colleague who has, or has had, cancer, and one for your manager. You can download the leaflets from www.kræft.kk.dk/viden-og-vaerktøjer/materialer/pjecer-om-stoette-til-at-vende-tilbage-paa-arbejde