



What to Do If You Are Too Unwell to Work

Report absence clearly, check evidence and pay, and plan a safe return.

For care workers in England, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland has separate employment rules: contact the Labour Relations Agency. General information, not individual legal advice. Rights depend on employment status, contract and circumstances. No assessment or certificate.

What to do now

Tell the designated manager using the sickness-reporting procedure as soon as you can. Explain that you cannot safely work and when you will update them. Physical and mental illness both matter. If symptoms could expose residents or colleagues to infection, follow the service infection-control procedure and obtain appropriate health advice.

What to ask

Ask what absence evidence is needed, who needs it and how to send it privately. Employees can normally self-certify for the first seven calendar days; longer absence usually requires a fit note. Ask payroll about current statutory and contractual sick-pay eligibility rather than assuming full pay or relying on an old rate.

What to record

Keep the date you reported sick, the person contacted, evidence supplied and agreed check-ins. Record any relevant workplace issue affecting your health. Share necessary health information with authorised people, not a team group chat. Keep copies of your own fit notes and pay correspondence.

What to avoid

Do not attend solely because you feel guilty if you cannot work safely. Equally, do not simply stop responding: agree manageable contact arrangements. Do not promise a return date you cannot assess. A fit note or diagnosis does not remove the need to discuss safe duties and support.

Words you can adapt

I am unwell and unable to work my shift on [date]. I have followed the reporting procedure and will update [person] by [date/time]. Please confirm evidence and sick-pay arrangements. Before returning, I would like to discuss any support needed to work safely.

Where to get help

Seek medical advice for your health and Acas or union advice for employment questions. Discuss return-to-work support, possible adjustments or a phased return with the employer. Urgent illness needs urgent healthcare rather than waiting for a workplace response.

Your next steps

- Report through the correct route.
- Check evidence and pay.
- Agree contact.
- Discuss a safe return.

Sources and further help

Acas: Sick leave

Northern Ireland: Labour Relations Agency

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