

## Getting a doctors report about a workers health

A doctor's report can help an employer make informed decisions about their worker's health at work.

Examples of when an employer might ask for a doctor's report include to:

- assess whether someone is fit to carry out their work
- prevent health and safety risks
- explore changes that might help reduce absence
- manage long-term or repeated short-term absences (for example, to establish the reason for an absence)
- manage capability issues, particularly if the employer is considering dismissal
- decide on entitlement to company sick pay
- check eligibility for a permanent health insurance or ill-health early retirement scheme
- assess whether a disabled worker needs [reasonable adjustments](#)

### Accessing medical records

Getting a doctor's report is sometimes referred to as asking to see a worker's medical records. However, an employer will never get access to a worker's full records. A doctor's report will only contain the information they need to support the worker's health at work.

### Getting agreement from the worker

An employer must get a worker's permission to ask for a report about their health.

An employer should tell their worker:

- why they're asking for the report
- that they will not get access to their full medical records, only the information they need
- who will see the report

The employer must inform the worker in writing of their rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988.

Workers have the right to:

- refuse their employer permission to get a medical report
- ask to see the doctor's report before it goes to their employer
- ask the doctor to correct the report if it includes anything inaccurate or misleading
- refuse to share the report with their employer
- change their mind about not seeing the doctor report before it goes to their employer
- ask to see a copy of the report at any time within 6 months of it being completed

If the worker says they want to see the report before it is shared with their employer, the employer must tell the doctor this when applying for the report.

At the same time, they must notify the worker that they have applied for a report.

The worker must contact their doctor within 21 days of the application being made to arrange access to the report.

If the worker changes their mind about not seeing the doctor's report before it goes to their employer, they must tell their doctor they want to see the report within 21 days of the employer applying for it.

If the worker does not give permission for their employer to ask for a report, the employer will have to make decisions based on:

- anything the worker has told them
- information in the worker's [fit note](#) – they'll have this if they've been off sick for more than 7 days
- an [occupational health](#) report, if they have one

## How to ask for a doctor's report

When asking for a report about a worker's health, an employer should only request the information they need.

For example, they might ask:

- how long a worker is likely to be off sick
- whether the worker is disabled
- what support might help a worker return to work

The request for the report must contain:

- a signed copy of the worker's consent form
- a statement confirming that the employee has read and understood the explanation of their rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988

Use our templates for:

- [a form to ask for a worker's consent to get a medical report](#)
- [a letter to ask for a worker's permission to approach their doctor for a medical report](#)
- [a letter to a worker's doctor to ask for a medical report](#)

## Keeping information confidential

The employer must keep any information they get about a worker confidential. The information should only be available to those who genuinely need access to it. This could include the worker's line manager and the Human Resources team.

The employer should keep the worker informed of how they're storing and using the report about their health.

The employer should also let their worker know from the start how to withdraw their consent to a report, if they later wish to.

[Read more about data protection and health information from the Information Commissioner's Office](#)

If a worker is unhappy with how their confidential information has been handled, they can [raise this with their employer](#).

## Contact the Acas helpline

If you have any questions about asking for a report about a worker's health, [contact the Acas helpline](#).

## Support for employers

Employers and managers can get government guidance on supporting workers' health and disabilities.

[Find support with worker health and disability on GOV.UK](#)