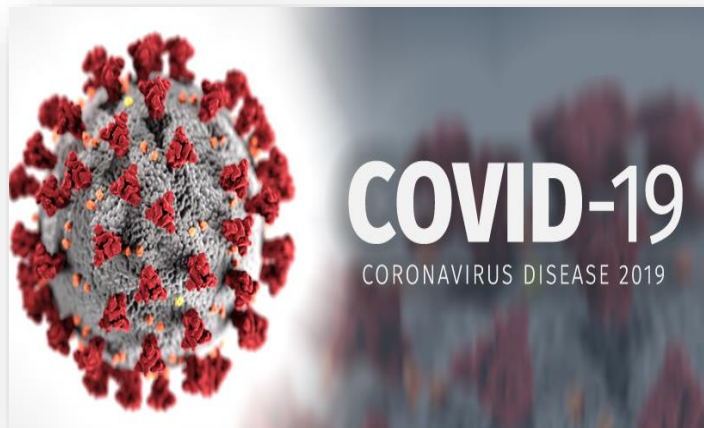




**NIOH Online Training Programme  
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# **Medical fitness for work assessment of an employee returning to work post COVID-19**



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# Case Study



- 52 year old male
- Essential worker
- No comorbidities

11 May 2020	INITIAL PERIOD OF HOSPITALISATION		11 June 2020	30 June 2020
<p><b>Initial Findings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diagnosed with COVID-19</li> <li>• Confirmed by Positive SARS COV-2 Lab results</li> <li>• Registered for internal Case Management process</li> <li>• Psychosocial Support to employee and family</li> </ul>	<p><b>Investigation and Tracing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incident Investigation: Non Occupational COVID-19</li> <li>• Contact tracing: 8 close contacts quarantined for 14 days (-ve lab tests)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow up Findings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sick leave: 11/05 to 19 June 2020</li> <li>• Hospital: 30 days               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 Days Isolation</li> <li>• 20 Days ICU (Intubated for 8days)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Further 15 days home based recovery</li> <li>• Negative test: 24 June</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleared for R2W</li> </ul>	
30 June 2020		SECONDARY ILLNESS		3 August 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reported for Duty</li> <li>• Referred back to treating Dr for further Tx</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sick leave: 1 July to 4 Aug 2020</li> <li>• Additional Diagnoses:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hypertension</li> <li>• Major Depression</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Aug 2020</li> <li>• Submitted medical report               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symptom free</li> <li>• Fit to resume duties</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

# Question to answers during this presentation:

- What is the purpose of a medical fitness for work assessment of an employee returning to work post COVID19?
- When should a medical fitness for work assessment of an employee returning to work post COVID-19 be conducted?
- Who should conduct a medical fitness for work assessment of an employee returning to work post COVID-19 ?
- How should a medical fitness for work assessment of an employee returning to work post COVID-19 be conducted?
- What was the outcome of the medical fitness for work assessment of an employee returning to work post COVID-19 ?

# Medical fitness for work assessment of an employee returning to work post COVID-19?

- When conducting a medical fitness for work assessment, one has to bear in mind that **Occupational Health has developed** from a **Fit for task and risk-based-only** approach to a more **Comprehensive multidisciplinary approach**



Occupational Health



- Considers the employee's **mental, physical and social-well being, general health and personal development**
- The COVID-19 pandemic has also made us **rethink** the provision of **Occ health services**.

# What is the purpose of a medical fitness for work assessment of an employee returning to work post COVID19?

- **The purpose of a medical fitness for work assessment is**
- To **ensure** that an employee returning to work after a period of absence due to COVID-19 can:
  - **complete their tasks effectively and efficiently**
  - **without risk to their own health and safety** or that of fellow employees
  - and that they are **fit for location**.



# When should a medical fitness for work assessment of an employee returning to work post COVID-19 be conducted ?



- *From our Case Study: “On the 26 June 2020, he submitted a medical report which indicated that he was symptom free and fit to resume his normal duties. He also submitted the negative SARS-COV-2 results done on 24 June 2020.”*

- COVID-19 Medical fitness for work assessment should be conducted:
  - After the employee has been isolated and de-isolated in line with the Department of Health **Updated De-isolation Recommendations**. De-isolation is not the same as recovery.
  - In line with the approved return to work strategy: **Test-based or Non-Test based or dual strategy** .
  - When the employee advises employer that they are recovered and able to resume their **work duties** as informed by their treating medical practitioner **through a medical report or a medical certificate**
  - *This applies whether the employee works from home or back in the workplace.*

# Who should conduct a medical fitness for work assessment of an employee returning to work post COVID-19 ?



*A medical fitness for work assessment was booked for the 29/06/2020 and 30/06/2020. The employee was advised to stay home until the assessment has been conducted . The manager and HR manager were informed.*

- The fitness for work assessment of all hospitalised essential employees with moderate to severe COVID-19 is conducted by **the occupational medicine practitioner/occupational health specialist.**
- The fitness for work assessment of all symptomatic with mild COVID-19 and asymptomatic essential employees and those working from home is conducted by **the occupational health nurse.**
- All symptomatic with mild COVID-19 and asymptomatic essential employees who do not fully recover within 20 days from the date of the diagnosed **are referred to the occupational medicine practitioner/occupational health specialist .**

# How should a medical fitness for work assessment of an employee returning to work post COVID-19 be conducted?



*“On the 29 June 2020, the occupational health nurse contacted the employee and **to complete the COVID-19 Fit for Work Assessment Questionnaire (COVID -19 questionnaire) which was completed virtually with the employee.**”*

- COVID -19 questionnaire may be completed telephonically or by sending it to the employee electronically.
- The COVID-19 questionnaire is designed to gather information that can be used to determine outcome of the fitness for work or whether there is a need for face to face consultation
- The information gathered from the questionnaire especially on the current health symptoms and the work environment was compared to the type of tasks and environment in which the employee is due to return to work.
- **The person(man) job specification is critical in providing such information**
- **It was noted from the questionnaire that the employee indicated that he has dizzy spells, episodes of tight chest, shortness of breath and that he was afraid that he was going to die and worried about his family**



# How should a medical fitness for work assessment of an employee returning to work post COVID-19 be conducted?



*“The employee arrived at the medical centre on the 30 June 2020 for the face to face consultation with the occupational medicine practitioner. All health and safety control measures were observed.”*

- Clinical assessment was conducted which included full history , current symptoms and general examination.
- **The clinical assessment findings :**
  - 52-years old male complaining of *fatigue, difficulty in concentrating, spells of dizziness, temporal headache, joint muscle pains, insomnia , episode of tightness of the chest and shortness of breath .*
  - **Clinical examination:** **BP: 168/103**, HGT: 7 mmol Temperature : 36.6 , **SATS (pulse oximeter) : 95 %** , Pulse : 98 beats per minutes and regular , Respiratory rate: 20 breaths per minute.
  - **Respiratory system:** Clear and good air enter bilaterally, **CVS** : Clinically normal.
  - **Central Nervous System** : Neurologically intact
  - **Other systems** were clinically normal.



*30 June 2020*

*Medical Fitness for Work Assessment outcome:*

- Based on the information gathered from the questionnaire and during the clinical assessment and the nature of the job the employee is employed for, the outcome of the fitness for work assessment was that **the employee was temporarily unfit for work.**
- The employee was referred to his treating healthcare professionals for further medical care , sick leave to be considered by the line manager and that the employee will only return to work after the next fitness for work assessment .
- The treating general practitioner and specialist physician were contacted to arrange for the employee referral and an appointment was secured for 1 July 2020.
- The outcome of the assessment was shared with the employee and the his line manager.



*“The employee was again put on sick leave from the 1 July 2020 to 4 August 2020. From our case management, we established that the employee was seen by a multidisciplinary team which include his general practitioner , pulmonologist, neurologist, psychologist, psychiatrist and occupational therapists.”*

- On the 3 August 2020, we received a medical report from the treating specialist physician that general health status of the employee has improved.
- A COVID-19 medical fitness for work assessment , through a medical questionnaire and clinical examination, was conducted on the 5 August 2020. Though the employee medical condition had improved significantly since the last consultation in June 2020 , he was now diagnosed with hypertension and depression.
- The outcome of the fitness for work assessment conducted on 5 August 2020, was that the employee is fit for work with temporary reasonable job accommodation which included that the employee be allowed to work from home until 30 March 2021.

THANK  
YOU

A graphic of a stethoscope where the tubing forms the letters 'YOU' in a lowercase, cursive font. The chest piece is positioned above the 'Y' and the ear pieces are at the ends of the tubing.