

FIT NOTE explanation

When do I need a fit note?

Seven days off sick or less

If you're off work sick for seven days or less, your employer shouldn't ask for medical evidence that you've been ill. Instead they can ask you to confirm that you've been ill. You can do this by filling in a form yourself when you return to work. This is called self-certification.

More than seven days off sick

If you're off work sick for more than seven days your employer will normally ask for a fit note (or Statement of Fitness for Work) from your GP or hospital doctor. Fit notes are sometimes referred to as medical statements or a doctor's note.

How to count sick days

When you work out the number of days that you've been sick, you need to count all the days in a row you've been sick, including days you don't normally work such as weekends and bank holidays.

How can I get a fit note?

If you need a fit note, contact your GP surgery. Or if you are getting hospital treatment, ask for one from your hospital doctor.

Your doctor will assess you, and if they decide your health affects your fitness for work, they can issue a fit note and advise either that:

- you are "not fit for work"
- you "may be fit for work taking into account the following advice"

Your doctor will choose the "may be fit for work" option if they think that you are able to do some work even if it not your usual job – with support from your employer.

Discuss this advice with your employer to see if you can return to work. For example, your doctor may suggest possible changes, such as:

- returning to work gradually – for example, by starting part-time
- temporarily working different hours
- performing different duties or tasks
- having other support to do your job – for example, if you have back pain, avoiding heavy lifting

If your employer is unable to accommodate the changes advised by your GP then the fit note is treated as though it said "unfit for work".

Charges for fit notes

There is never a charge from a doctor for providing a fit note if you're off sick from work for more than seven days.

For sickness of seven days or less, your GP practice may charge you to provide a private medical certificate.

For example, some employers may request medical evidence from employees who repeatedly take time off sick, even if each time they're off work it's for seven days or less. A fit note cannot be used for this purpose and a doctor may charge to issue a private certificate.