

Long-term health conditions and work: What good support looks like

Living with a long-term health condition while you work takes effort that often goes unseen. You may be managing symptoms, appointments, treatment, or fatigue alongside your usual workload. Some days feel manageable. Others take more out of you than anyone around you can tell.

Many people try to handle all of this on their own. They worry about being seen as less capable, or about asking for too much. Good support at work is not a special favour. It is what allows people to keep doing their jobs well while looking after their health.

This guide is for people managing a long-term condition alongside work, and for the managers who support them.

It looks at what reasonable adjustments are, how to have open conversations about what you need, and why good support works best as a shared responsibility.





The effort that doesn't show

When you live with a long-term condition, the job in front of you is rarely the whole job. Alongside it, you may be managing pain, fatigue, medication, appointments, or worry. This effort is real, but it rarely shows up in how your day looks to others.

It also uses energy. Pushing through quietly, masking how you feel, and working out what you can manage each day all draw on the same reserves you need for the work itself. Fluctuation makes this harder. On a good day, you may work much as you always have. On a harder day, the same tasks can take far more out of you. Over time, this hidden effort builds, even when your performance looks fine from the outside.

At work, you might pace yourself carefully, plan around symptoms, or find some days far harder than others without it being obvious to anyone else.

Outside work, recovery time can disappear. The energy spent getting through the day can leave little left for rest, home, or the things that help you feel well. Over time, carrying this alone can wear on mood, sleep, and confidence, even when the condition itself is not changing.

Good support starts by recognising this hidden effort. It focuses on what helps you work well, rather than how things appear from the outside.



Changes that make work more manageable

Reasonable adjustments are changes to how, when, or where you work that make your job more manageable alongside your health. They are not about lowering standards. They are about removing barriers that get in the way of work you are already able to do.

Flexible hours can make a real difference. Adjusting start times, building in breaks, or shifting hours around appointments or symptoms helps you manage energy without falling behind.

Changes to workload or tasks can also help. This might mean reprioritising during harder periods, adjusting deadlines, or moving temporarily away from tasks that are difficult right now.

Where and how you work matters too. Working from home on certain days, a quieter space, or equipment that reduces physical strain can lower the daily effort a condition adds.

A phased return supports people coming back after time off. Building hours and responsibilities back up gradually protects recovery and makes a lasting return more likely.

The right adjustments depend on the person and the role. Small, well-matched changes often help far more than large ones that are hard to use day to day.



Talking about it on your terms

Talking about a health condition at work can feel daunting. You may worry about being judged, treated differently, or having your competence questioned. You do not have to share more than you are comfortable with.

You do not need to disclose your diagnosis to ask for support. Conversations work best when they focus on what helps, not on medical detail. Describing the impact is often more useful than naming the condition.

It can help to come with a sense of what would make things easier. Even a rough idea gives the conversation somewhere to go. You can adjust as you learn what works.

This can sound like:

- *“Some days are harder than others, and a bit of flexibility would really help.”*
- *“My health is affecting my energy at the moment.”*
- *“A few small changes would help me do my best work.”*

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At HealthHero, we often speak to people who have managed a long-term condition for years, assuming they should not ask for anything. Many are coping, but at a cost to their energy, focus, and wellbeing. The effort of hiding how they feel is often heavier than the condition itself. When people feel able to talk openly and get the right support early, that hidden strain drops, and work becomes far more sustainable. You do not need to wait until you are struggling to ask for help.

Good support works both ways

Good support is not something one person must carry alone. It works best when responsibility is shared between the employee, the manager, and the wider organisation.

Your part is to share what you can, when you feel able, and to say when something is or is not working. You do not need to have every answer. Noticing what helps and what does not is enough to start.



What managers can do that helps

If you manage someone with a long-term condition, these are some of the most effective ways to offer support without lowering standards:



Lead with the person, not the condition

Ask what would help rather than assuming you know. The same diagnosis can affect two people very differently.



Make adjustments easy to ask for

When support is offered as normal, people speak up earlier, before strain builds.



Keep checking in

Needs change as conditions change. A short, regular conversation works better than a single fixed plan.



Protect privacy

Share only what is needed, and only with those who need to know. Trust makes open conversation possible.



Focus on outcomes

Be clear about what good work looks like, rather than how or when it must be done.



If you change one thing

Start the conversation early. Support tends to work best before strain builds, not after. You do not need a plan or a diagnosis to begin. A willingness to say that something would help is enough.

When support is shared in this way, it stops being a one-off accommodation and becomes part of how a team works well together.



When to reach out, and how HealthHero can help

Managing a long-term condition alongside work can affect more than your physical health. It can wear on your mood, your sleep, and how you feel about yourself, especially during harder periods.

It may help to reach out if you feel persistently low, anxious, or overwhelmed, if work and your health feel increasingly hard to balance, or if you are carrying the strain on your own and it is starting to feel like too much.

If your condition is affecting your sleep, or leaving you feeling under constant pressure, the HealthHero guides on sleep and on pressure may also help.

How HealthHero can help

If managing a long-term condition alongside work has been difficult, support can help you think through what might make things easier.

Through your EAP, you can speak to a trained counsellor in confidence, at a time that suits you. You can talk about the pressure you are under, how it is affecting you, and ways to manage work and wellbeing together.

You do not need a crisis or a diagnosis to reach out. Support is there to help you feel more able to manage, in work and beyond.



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Contact **HealthHero today for more support and advice. We're with you every step of the way.**

All information correct as of June, 2026