

WORK AND STEM CELL TRANSPLANTS:

# A QUICK GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS



**ANTHONY  
NOLAN**

saving the lives  
of people with  
blood cancer

#BMTsupport

### **Disclaimer**

At Anthony Nolan we take great care to provide up-to-date and accurate facts about stem cell transplants. We hope the information here will help you support your employee.

Each transplant centre will do things differently, so this leaflet is just a general guide and isn't intended to replace advice from a patient's doctor or transplant team.

This information is not a substitute for legal advice. If you or your employee need legal advice, please contact a solicitor. While we do everything we can to provide the highest quality information, Anthony Nolan will not accept any liability for the use, or inability to use any information provided in this leaflet.

© Anthony Nolan 2016

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted without permission in writing from Anthony Nolan.

All trademarks and brand names referred to are acknowledged as belonging to their respective owners.

The information contained in this booklet is correct at the time of going to print (December 2016)

Anthony Nolan is a registered charity  
No 803716/SC038827

WORK AND STEM CELL TRANSPLANTS:

# A QUICK GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS



saving the lives  
of people with  
blood cancer

**ANTHONY NOLAN**  
PATIENT SERVICES  
TEAM

# WHAT'S IN THIS LEAFLET?

This is a quick guide to help you gain more insight into stem cell transplants and the impact on your employee. Whether they're just about to have a transplant, they're recovering from one or if they've had one a long time ago but still need some support.

For more detailed information about all of these issues read our booklet **Work and Stem Cell Transplants: an In-Depth Guide for Employers**.

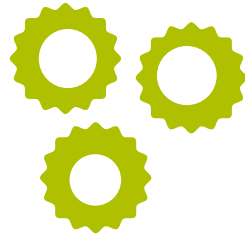




‘YOU WILL BE EMPLOYING  
SOMEONE WHO MAY  
HAVE A DEEPER  
UNDERSTANDING OF  
LIFE. AND IT SHOWS  
THAT CANCER DOESN’T  
HAVE TO END BADLY.’

**Crispin**, had a transplant in 2013

# 1 WHAT IS A STEM CELL TRANSPLANT?



Learning about a stem cell transplant will help you gain a better understanding of what your employee is going through and how best to support them.

A stem cell transplant is a treatment for blood cancer or blood disorders. Before the transplant itself your employee will have had treatment that includes chemotherapy, and often radiotherapy, too. This is called ‘conditioning therapy’ which prepares the bone marrow to accept the new stem cells and wipes out their immune system. Their doctors will then put new, healthy blood stem cells into their bloodstream where they find their way to the bone marrow.

They’ll have to spend time afterwards recovering in hospital, and will have a period in isolation where their team keeps a close eye on them. They’ll normally have to spend three to four weeks in hospital, sometimes longer.

Once people go back home this is just the beginning of what can sometimes be a complicated recovery, lasting at least six months to a year, and sometimes longer. By keeping that in mind, you can give them the best possible support in the longer term.

# 2 YOUR EMPLOYEE’S RIGHTS



As someone with blood cancer or a blood disorder, your employee is protected under the Equality Act 2010 in England, Scotland and Wales, or the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland. This means that it’s illegal for them to be discriminated against at work or to be treated less favourably for reasons relating to their ill health.

As their employer, you should try and find ways to make reasonable adjustments to support them in work both before and after their transplant. For example, by making changes to their work location, arrangements or duties.

## More information

For more information on equality law, contact **ACAS, Equality and Human Rights Commission** or **Macmillan Cancer Support** who have a **Guide to Reasonable Adjustments**.

If your employee is caring for someone who is having or is recovering from a transplant, they are legally entitled to take ‘reasonable’ time off work to deal with an emergency affecting a dependant. Whether this is paid or not will depend on your organisation’s policy. Carers also have the right to request flexible working. This includes working from home or changing hours.

### 3 TAKING TIME OFF WORK



Your employee may be able to tell you about their health at the moment and give you a rough estimate about when they may return to work. But it's very important to realise that things aren't set in stone and recovery varies from person to person.

#### What helps?

- Work with your employee to decide how you'll keep in touch and review this from time to time. They'll be feeling very unwell during and after their transplant, so they could put you in touch with a friend or family member who could update you on their behalf.
- Talk to your employee about their entitlement to Company and Statutory Sick Pay; point them in the direction of your work policy for guidance.
- Take advantage of **Macmillan Cancer Support's** and **ACAS's** training and information for employers.



'FOR ME THE MAIN ISSUE WHEN RETURNING TO WORK WAS CONFIDENCE. SO IN ORDER TO BUILD THIS UP IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO ESTABLISH A RAPPORT WITH MY LINE MANAGER. THE KEY WAS FLEXIBILITY! IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY TO ADMIT THAT YOU ARE NOT COPING AND CAN'T DO AS MUCH AS BEFORE.'

Ariane, had a transplant in 2011



## 4 GOING BACK TO WORK

It's important that your employee doesn't go back to work too early. But once they're on the road to recovery, your employee may want to think about making preparations for going back. Working after a stem cell transplant may be a big milestone for your employee.

It can be an important part of making them feel 'normal' again, as well as helping to boost their confidence and prevent them feeling low.

As an employer or manager you'll play a vital supporting role. Helping people who are going through or recovering from a transplant to remain in or return to work will have benefits for your organisation, business and other staff too.

### **What helps?**

Arrange a meeting with your employee and your HR department, if you have one, to agree a return to work plan.

Your employee's transplant team may be able to provide a 'fit note' advising on what changes may help.

An occupational health advisor can support you and your employee in reviewing

what adjustments may help, and also make an assessment of their fitness for work.

If you don't have access to an occupational health adviser, then the government's **Fit for Work** service offer impartial advice on returning to work – visit **fitforwork.org**

An Access to Work grant could help pay for practical support to help your employee stay in work.

Find out more at **gov.uk/access-to-work**

With your employee's permission you could give out our leaflet, **Supporting your Friend Through a Bone Marrow or Stem Cell Transplant**, to help their colleagues better understand what they've been through.

**'FOR MY PARTNER, IT WAS A STAGGERED RETURN – HE HAD DAYS WHEN HE COULD JUST FLOP AND REST. AS I SAW HE COULD MANAGE IT, I WAS LESS ANXIOUS.'**

Caroline's partner had a transplant in 2012

## 5 DEALING WITH THE EFFECTS OF A TRANSPLANT AT WORK



After a transplant, even though they might look well, it's likely that your employee will be dealing with the long-term psychological and physical effects of their treatment.

You'll need to consider reasonable adjustments to support them at work, so it's good to be aware of the main side effects that people recovering from a transplant will go through.

Everyone is different, but some of the long-term side effects of a transplant include:

- Increased risk of infections
- Fatigue
- Memory and concentration problems
- Depression and anxiety
- A condition called graft versus host disease (GvHD).

Talk to your employee to try and understand their needs, as well as what support they feel they may need from you in returning to work.





Here are some brief tips that might help your employee, which could be considered as part of the reasonable adjustments you make to support them:

- Going back to work gradually (a phased return) and starting with reduced or part-time hours might help ease them into things.
- They might need to vary or change duties for a while to make it easier to manage side effects, like a weakened immune system or fatigue. For example, could they work in an office rather than interacting directly with the public? Could they sit down at times, instead of being on their feet all day?
- They may be able to identify times when they feel most awake, energised and able to work. It may be that they could do different shifts or hours for a while.
- See if they can factor in regular breaks, and stop and rest if they need it.
- Working from home could help reduce their risk of infection and make things more manageable if they're dealing with fatigue. Could they start or finish slightly earlier or later to avoid the rush hour?
- It's also important that your employee takes care of themselves as well as working. Taking time to rest, relax and exercise; looking after their emotions and getting more support if they need it, will help your employee at work and at home.

## 6 WE'RE HERE TO HELP



Finding out that your employee has a blood cancer or blood disorder and needs a transplant could be a big shock for you. You might need more information and support for yourself. The Anthony Nolan Patient Services team are here for you and your employee.

### **Find information**

Our website has lots of helpful information about what it's like to go through a transplant. Download or order our booklets for free, and find links to other places where you can get support at [anthonynolan.org/patientinfo](https://www.anthonynolan.org/patientinfo)

### **Need to talk?**

The Patient Services team at Anthony Nolan are here to answer any questions. Call us on **0303 303 0303** or email [patientinfo@anthonynolan.org](mailto:patientinfo@anthonynolan.org)



'GOING BACK TO WORK  
HAS SO MANY BENEFITS  
- IT'S DIFFICULT TO  
QUANTIFY HOW MUCH I  
ENJOYED BEING PART OF  
A TEAM, BEING BACK AT  
WORK WITH MY MATES.'

**Crispin**, had a transplant in 2013

[anthohnolan.org/patientinfo](http://anthohnolan.org/patientinfo)  
[facebook.com/anthohnolanpatients](https://facebook.com/anthohnolanpatients)

[patientinfo@anthohnolan.org](mailto:patientinfo@anthohnolan.org)  
0303 303 0303

[blog.anthohnolan.org](http://blog.anthohnolan.org)

Reg Charity no 803716/SC038827  
878PA-EmpA/1116



saving the lives  
of people with  
blood cancer