

## Getting a doctors report about an employees health

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

Examples of when an employer might ask for a report about an employee's health include to:

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

### Accessing medical records

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

### Getting agreement from the employee

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

An employer should tell their employee:

- 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 employee can:

- ask their doctor not to give information they think could be damaging or is not relevant
- ask to see the doctor's report first
- not agree to the doctor's report being shared with their employer if they disagree with what it says

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

- anything the employee has told them
- information in the employee'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 an employee's health, an employer should only request the information they need.

For example, they might ask:

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

[Use our template letter to an employee's doctor](#)

## Keeping information confidential

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

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

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

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

If an employee 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 an employee's health, [contact the Acas helpline](#).

## Support for employers

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

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