



## **Pre-return-to-work medical consultation for low back pain workers. Good practice recommendations based on systematic review and expert consensus**

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**OBJECTIVES:** The pre-return-to-work medical consultation during sick leave for low back pain (LBP) aims at assessing the worker's ability to resume working without risk for his/her health, and anticipating any difficulties inherent to returning to work and job retention. This article summarizes the good practices guidelines proposed by the French Society of Occupational Medicine (SFMT) and the French National Health Authority (HAS), and published in October 2013.

**METHODS:** Good practices guidelines developed by a multidisciplinary and independent task force (24 experts) and peer review committee (50 experts) based on a literature review from 1990 to 2012, according to the HAS methodology.

**RESULTS:** According to the labour regulations, workers can request a medical consultation with their occupational physician at any time. The pre-return-to-work consultation precedes the effective return-to-work and can be requested by the employee regardless of their sick leave duration. It must be scheduled early enough to: (i) deliver reassuring information regarding risks to the lower back and managing LBP; (ii) evaluate prognostic factors of chronicity and prolonged disability in relations to LBP and its physical, social and occupational consequences in order to implement the necessary conditions for returning to work; (iii) support and promote staying at work by taking into account all medical, social and occupational aspects of the situation and ensure proper coordination between the different actors.

**CONCLUSION:** A better understanding of the pre-return-to-work consultation would improve collaboration and coordination of actions to facilitate resuming work and job retention for patients with LBP.

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