



Transition Support Service

# Finding a job with a chronic health condition/disability for young people

**Finding a job can be tricky, especially if it's your first job. If you are planning to work and have a chronic health condition/disability, there are some helpful things to know about such as knowing your rights as an employee and how to best manage your health at work. Your job should never compromise your health and this booklet will provide you with some handy tips to find a job and be a happy and healthy member of the workforce.**

## Where to start?

Looking for a job can be an overwhelming experience and with so many different careers on offer it can be confusing to know what is right for you. Once you have some thoughts about what you would like to do, discuss this with your doctor or healthcare team as there might be some considerations specific to your health condition/disability that you may not be aware of.

A great place to start is MyFuture, which is a website that provides general information about different career paths, even if you have no idea where to start. The website includes a career profile tool, information on education and training, as well as resources to help you become job ready.

<http://myfuture.edu.au/getting-started>

## Finding the right job for you?

Youth Central website

[www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/jobs-careers](http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/jobs-careers)

This is a great website for young people who are starting in the workforce. It has a number of great resources to help you, such as finding a job, applying for one and job interview tips.

# Writing a resume or curriculum vitae (CV)

If you've never had a job, writing a resume can be a bit daunting. This document will show your past achievements, perhaps in the context of you managing your health condition/disability. You can ask a referee to explain to your employer how you have successfully managed your medical condition alongside other tasks.

Here are some important things you could include in your resume:

- 1. Personal details** such as your full name, contact numbers and email address (avoid using unprofessional email addresses).
- 2. Your medical condition/disability.** You certainly don't have to include your medical condition/disability on your resume but at the same time don't be afraid to write a short paragraph. To an employer it can help present you in a positive way. It can also prove you are resilient and good at managing multiple aspects of your life effectively.
- 3. Education and training.** Add any professional training you have completed or are completing to your resume along with your highest level of education. If you're looking for a job straight out of high school, be sure to include your completion of VCE or VCAL or any courses/certificates you have completed with dates (e.g. 2010–12 Cert II in Hospitality, first aid).
- 4. Personal traits.** Emphasise your best personal characteristics such as enjoying working in a team environment or ability to relate well to people. Also include your strengths, extracurricular activities and major awards or achievements such as holding a leadership position in high school, being chosen to public speak at an event or being the recipient of an award.
- 5. Employment history.** Include details of previous employment in your resume with employer's information, your job title, how long you worked there (dates if possible) and your main responsibilities and achievements in this job.

- 6. Volunteering or work experience.** Volunteering experience can prove you have initiative and drive. It can really enhance a resume and make you feel good at the same time. You may have had some work experience at school which you can add to your resume too.
- 7. Skills or personal abilities.** Include any specific skills that others may not have. Remember the aim of a resume is to try and set you apart from everyone else. This can include things such as fast typing, good communications skills and leadership capabilities.
- 8. Referees.** Make a list of at least two referees (or as many as requested by the employer) and make sure you ask permission to include them first. A good referee is someone who honestly believes you will be a worthy employee and can attest to your character and attributes but do avoid using family members. Good referees might be teachers, mentors or previous employers. Make sure you include their name, organisation, job title, phone number/s and email address.

## Resume checklist:

- Is less than two–three pages long
- Has all updated information including contact details, referees and job experience
- Your experience or qualities are tailored to the job you are applying for
- Ensure you meet the key criteria for the job you are applying for (this can be reflected in your resume)
- Is formatted well, neat and easy to follow
- Is an accurate description of you
- Uses appropriate language, spelling and grammar—double check this and ask someone to look over it for you before sending to a prospective employer

## Cover letter for a job application

A good cover letter to accompany your resume should include:

- The name of contact person on the job advertisement. Do not use a generic title such as 'sir/madam' if a name has been listed on the advertisement and address the contact person formally (e.g. Ms, Mr) rather than using first names.
- Your correct contact details
- Date
- Reference to the position that you are applying for
- Why you are interested in applying for this position
- What makes you suited to this position (note key points, experience, characteristics that you would like to highlight)
- Appropriate language, spelling and grammar—double check this

## Preparing for an interview

Being prepared can make the world of difference to you securing the job that you want. If you have been successful with your job application and contacted for an interview, the next step is to impress your prospective employer. The interview gives you an opportunity to show how much you know and why you are the best person for the job.

Here is how you can prepare for your interview:

- 1. Find out as much as you can about the organisation you're applying for.** Look up information through their website or written information about the organisation. You may even know people who have worked for the organisation so it's often worth chatting to these contacts too. This shows that you've taken the initiative to do your research and proves your genuine interest in working with them.
- 2. Understand the role you are applying for.** Find out what the role and responsibilities of this position are. A good way to do this is to read and make sure you understand the position description which is often posted in job advertisements, using the organisation's website, asking other or former employees or calling them directly to ask.
- 3. Anticipate the questions you may be asked and practise your responses to them.** Write these down as dot points and don't be afraid to bring this into the interview if you need to. Questions which are usually asked in interviews include:
  - What is your understanding of this role?
  - What do you know about this organisation?
  - What qualities or experience do you have which fit with this job?
  - Why did you apply for this position?
  - What are your long term goals?
  - What would you do in a particular situation? (you might be asked to problem solve an issue—this is often related to the key qualities which the organisation is looking for and may be found in the position description)

To demonstrate your genuine interest in the role, prepare questions for the interviewer/s too. You could ask questions related to information you read about the organisation on their website, specific questions related to the role you are applying for or ask for an indication of when they will make a decision about the successful applicant.

- 4. Provide all the documents and forms as requested.** You may be asked to bring along some essential documents or forms to your interview. This demonstrates you are organised and keen. Some documents they ask for may be:
  - Identification
  - Forms that are specific to the organisation such as a contract or medical information form
  - Tax file number
  - Any clearances or checks required, i.e. Working with Children's Check
  - Your resume
- 5. Pick out what you're going to wear and how you want to present yourself.** Think about what to wear to an interview as first impressions are important. Neat, smart business wear is appropriate but this could depend on what type of job you're applying for.
- 6. Practise, practise, practise!** Running through an interview situation at home beforehand can help you feel more comfortable and relaxed when you're doing the real thing.
- 7. Work out how to get there and how long it will take you.** Don't be late. Get there at least 10–15 minutes early. Be calm and relaxed. If you're prepared, then you'll be ready for anything.

More great resources are available at Youth Central:

[www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/jobs-careers/job-interviews](http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/jobs-careers/job-interviews)

## Being interview ready checklist

- Find out about the organisation you're applying for
- Have a good understanding of the role you're applying for
- Write down and practice answering some questions you may be asked and any questions you might like to ask them
- Prepare copies of documents as requested
- Bring details of referees with you
- Dress appropriately
- Arrive 10–15 minutes early
- Be confident and speak clearly
- Remember to thank them for their time after the interview

## Telling your employer about your health condition/disability

Telling your employer about your health condition/disability can be difficult but it could help to create a supportive environment in your workplace and develop a mutual understanding between you and your employer. Let's take a look at telling your employer from a simple who, what, when and how approach.

### Who you need to tell and when

In some cases, your manager may be the only person who needs to be informed about your health requirements and/or limitations. In larger companies, you may need to inform someone from human resources. The best way to find out who you need to tell is to ask your manager. Employers legally have to know about your health condition/disability, mainly for occupational health and safety reasons. Any information you tell your employer about your health has to be kept private and confidential unless you express otherwise.

You do not need to disclose your health information to others if you don't want to. However, choosing to inform your colleagues about your condition/disability could have its benefits as they may be more understanding.

When to tell your employer about your health condition/disability may vary depending on the risks associated with your health. If your employer asks you a direct question about it, you have to be honest. It may be useful to write a short script as a practice run. Telling an employer before or during an interview is a good idea if it will realistically impact your ability to perform that role. Otherwise, it may be helpful for your employer to know what kind of worker and personal attributes you have before you bring it up. It all will depend on the type of job you're applying for, how your condition/disability will affect it and if you are directly asked about it.

### How much do you need to tell your employer?

You don't have to go into great detail about your health but you should provide them with a basic understanding of your condition/disability and how it might affect your ability to work. The more your employer understands, the easier it's going to be if you need any extra support at work. At the same time, an under-informed employer can draw conclusions that may be inaccurate.

An employer may ask for a 'Fit to Work' letter from your doctor. This letter may outline your health condition or it could just provide a medical opinion that says you are fit to work. In this letter the doctor should include any restrictions you may have or it could provide recommendations such as regular rest of food/drink breaks.

When preparing what to tell your employer about your health condition/disability, here are some areas that they should know about:

- The name of your condition/disability
- The basics of your condition/disability
- How you manage your condition/disability
- How it might affect your ability to work
- What extra support you may need at work
- What to do in a medical emergency

## Managing your health at work

### Be realistic

Be realistic about your choice of employment and what may or may not be suitable for you, given your health condition/disability. Consider the impact of your health condition/disability on your employment and general lifestyle. You aren't expected to work beyond your health limitations just because you have entered the workforce. Talking to your doctor about how your health condition/disability can affect your ability to work may be useful before looking for a job as he/she may have some good advice on how to best manage your healthcare needs in your chosen role.

### Getting support or extra needs

Employers have a responsibility to accommodate, if possible, an employee with a health condition/disability. As an employee, it is your legal right to access extra support in a workplace. Extra support can range from extra breaks to movement aids. Do raise this with your employer because if they aren't aware there's a problem, they can't fix it.

If you aren't able to complete the work required even with extra supports in place then an employer has the legal right to hire someone else over you. If you're confused as to whether or not you've been discriminated against or if you would like to lodge a complaint, you can do so via the Federal Human Rights website:

[www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

### Developing an emergency plan in your workplace

Explain to your employer what steps need to be taken if you are affected by your health condition/disability whilst at work. If you are organised and explain the plan to your employer, it helps to ensure your safety at work in an emergency. It may be worth writing down what to do in an emergency situation and giving a copy to your employer for them to keep.

## Your rights and responsibilities as an employee

Every worker has equal employment rights in Australia, however the laws may vary slightly between each state. You have the right to work in a safe, respectful and healthy environment regardless of your health condition or employee status. It's good to know what rights you have as an employee and how they may apply to your situation. Here are a couple of websites which outline your rights, along with your role and responsibilities as an employee:

<http://australia.gov.au/topics/employment-and-workplace>

[www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au)

Fair work Australia also has some great information about pay rates, rights and entitlements as an employee on their website:

[www.fairwork.gov.au/](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/)

Living with a chronic health condition can be a juggling act but it's important to know your limitations and to put your health first, even in the workplace. Whilst you may not want to be treated differently from other employees, there may be times when you need to voice your concerns, particularly if you're feeling unwell. Remember that it is your employer's legal responsibility to look after their employees under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

[www.legislation.gov.au](http://www.legislation.gov.au)

It is reasonable for your employer to expect the same of you as with any other employee, unless your health condition/disability prevents you from carrying out any aspects of your role. You will be required to work in a respectful way with your co-workers ensuring that you don't endanger the health and safety of others. However, if you are injured or unwell, you have a responsibility to inform your employer within 30 days.

Federal and Victorian law protects you as an employee against discrimination or harassment on the basis of gender, disability, religion, race, colour, age or marital status. You can't be denied employment based on your health condition/disability unless it impacts on your ability to perform that job. It may be hard to work out if you're being unfairly discriminated against in the workplace but there is more information available at:

[www.humanrights.gov.au/info\\_for\\_employers/law/index.html#disability](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/info_for_employers/law/index.html#disability)

[www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au](http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au)

[www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au](http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au)

## Getting a Tax File Number (TFN)

Before you start your first job it is important to organise a Tax File Number. A TFN is a unique number given to you by the Australian Tax Office that is used to identify your tax records. Everyone has a different TFN.

### Applying for a Tax File Number

To get yourself a TFN all you have to do is visit the ATO website [www.ato.gov.au/](http://www.ato.gov.au/) and follow the links.

## Professional vs personal life

When you do start working, it's just as important to keep up with your personal life alongside working. This is often referred to as 'work life balance'. Those who are happiest and more productive at work, are people who can work hard whilst also making sure they enjoy a social life away from work. Consider how your social life may affect your work, e.g. going out the night before an early start at work isn't going to impress anyone especially if you turn up late as it would look unprofessional and inappropriate. You may make some really good friends within your workplace but do maintain professionalism whilst working with your colleagues.

### Be careful what you put online

With the growing accessibility and availability of the internet and social media sites, such as Facebook and Instagram, do consider what you put online for potential employment opportunities and for your safety. Once you put something online it's out there for everyone to see. Some companies check these social media sites and use the internet to learn more about you. If a potential employer was to see inappropriate or reckless behaviour on your profile, this could damage your job prospects with them.

## Other support services

There are other services and supports available to young people with chronic health conditions and disabilities who are looking for employment. Try The Royal Children's Hospital Transition website for links and services. Make sure to check out the 'Are You Ready? A Guide for Young People with a Chronic Health Condition/Disability' resource booklet.

[www.rch.org.au/transition](http://www.rch.org.au/transition)

**Centrelink** may offer services that may apply to you and support your ability to work. They can often provide financial help for any extra equipment or needs you may have.

[www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)

**Disability Employment Services** is an Australian Government body which helps people with a disability, injury or health condition find and secure work. More general information is available on:

Telephone: **1800 464 800** or

<http://employment.gov.au/disability-employment-services>

**JobAccess** provides free information and advice by phone or through the website on a range of disability employment issues including guides on recruitment, workplace modifications and your rights and responsibilities. They also provide help with your individual needs and can assist you in preparing for work, writing a resume, interview techniques and gaining new skills and qualifications.

Telephone: **1800 464 800** or

[www.jobaccess.gov.au/](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au/)



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