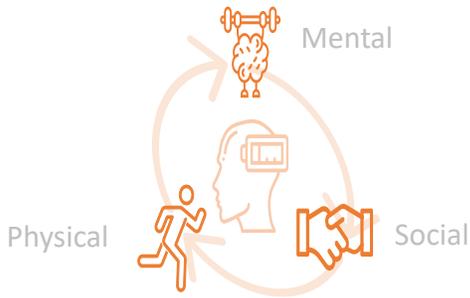


Return to work: physical and mental preparedness



Resources:

[Straighten Up Alberta Instructional Video](#)

Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors

[Stretches for the Office](#)

Chiropractic Association of Saskatchewan and WorkSafe Saskatchewan

[Straighten Up Canada](#)

Canadian Chiropractic Association

[Healthy Eating Resources](#)

Alberta Health Services

[How Has COVID-19 Impacted Canadians' Mental Health?](#)

Conference Board of Canada

Returning to work after COVID-19 hiatus?

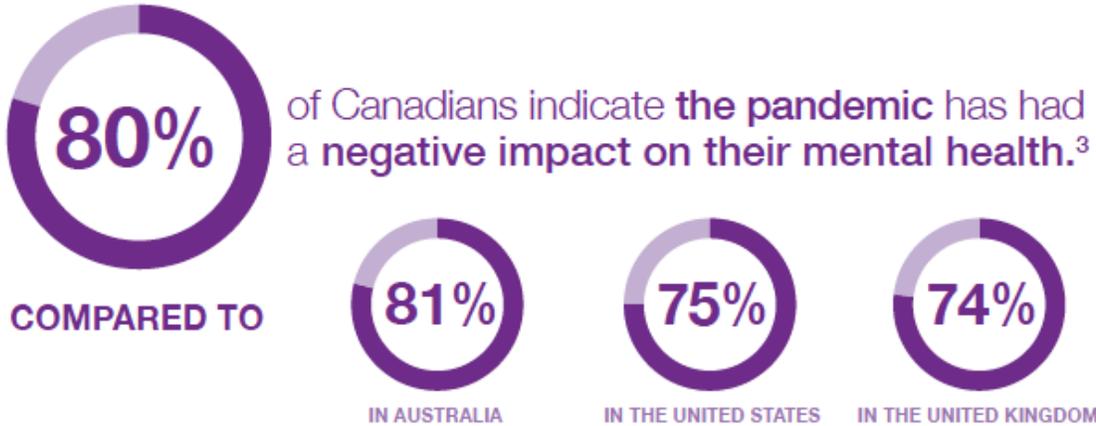
During the past few months, many energy-related workers have not been working because of the effects of the pandemic. For those accustomed to physically demanding positions, deconditioning—both mental and physical—is often rapid and, in some cases, significant. Others have been working at a slower pace or volume during COVID-19 and are now resuming their normal duties. Each of these scenarios require workers to increase their conditioning.

Fast facts:

Common impacts of deconditioning:

- **Reduced muscle strength.** The average human can lose between 1% and 3% of muscle strength per day, resulting in a noticeable loss of strength after weeks of sedentary behaviour.
- **Reduced cardiovascular fitness.** Lack of physical activity can cause the heart to lose strength, making it more difficult to quickly pump blood to muscles during physical activity. This results in less oxygen and energy molecules getting to the working muscle, causing the body and mind to fatigue quickly.
- **Reduced physical endurance.** When there is less oxygen getting to the working muscle and tissue, there can also be lactic acid buildup. This contributes to early muscle fatigue, muscle soreness following activity, and increased whole body fatigue.
- **Reduced range of motion in joints** due to less elasticity and muscle stiffness. Weeks of reduced activity may limit one's ability to extend or bend body segments and can lead to higher risk of straining a muscle.
- **Weight gain.** As workers switch from daily physical activity to a more sedentary lifestyle, they burn fewer calories per day.
- **Reduced heat tolerance.** While not technically part of deconditioning, spending more time indoors in air conditioning may have an impact on acclimatization to outside temperatures. If acclimatization has been lost, there may be increased risk for heat illness, especially when coupled with working harder because of decreased cardiovascular fitness and physical endurance.

Mental fitness:



Many workers lost their jobs temporarily as a result of COVID-19. There are a range of mental health resources, supports and care to help individuals to cope with stress and anxiety. Even before the pandemic hit, many workers were already struggling with their mental health. Essential workers may be experiencing additional stress right now as they adapt to new ways of working, returning to the workplace, changes in routine and the potential loss of coworkers. Therefore, employers must prioritize the mental health needs of their employees in the wake of COVID-19.

Mental fitness is just as important as physical fitness and shouldn't be neglected. Including mental dexterity exercises into your daily routine can help you maintain a sharp mind and a healthier body for years to come. These include active exercises such as learning a new song or playing a game, as well as restful ones such as relaxation and visualization.

Mental fitness is important to maintaining your brain and body healthy, especially as you age. Schedule a mental fitness break into your calendar.

Present like a pro:

Use these tips to share the information at your next safety meeting.

1. What types of warm ups are required to ensure your workers are ready to work?
2. How have you incorporated potential for deconditioned workers in your daily hazard assessments? Have you discussed the workers' mental fitness?
3. Provide examples that pertain to your work area(s). Draw from your own company's experiences when possible.

References:

- [MaintainingMentalFitness.com](https://www.maintainingmentalfitness.com)
- [WorkSafe Saskatchewan Psychological Health and Safety](https://www.worksafebc.com/psychological-health-and-safety)