



Employment

Quick Guide to Managing Side Effects at Work

Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides protections in the workplace for individuals with disabilities, including giving eligible employees access to “reasonable accommodations.” Reasonable accommodations are “any change in the work environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to participate in equal employment opportunities.” Reasonable accommodations can be changes in work space, work schedules, or policies, that help you continue to do your job, take time off work, or return to work. Reasonable accommodations can help you manage the side effects that you are experiencing, that may impact your ability to do your job effectively.

Remember that when thinking about possible accommodations that might work for you, that they have to still be “reasonable.” And, one accommodation might not address all of the challenges you are facing, so you may be able to request more than one accommodation. For more information about reasonable accommodations, read our Quick Guide to Reasonable Accommodations (TriageHealth.org/quick-guides/reasonable-accommodations).

Using Assistive Technologies

One form of a workplace reasonable accommodation is the use of “assistive technology.” There are different types of assistive technologies that could be helpful to deal with certain types of side effects, such as fatigue, temperature sensitivity, and executive functioning deficits. The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) describes possible accommodations that may help an employee manage side effects at work, including the use of assistive technologies. For descriptions and companies that provide these technologies, visit askjan.org/solutions.

Decreased Stamina/Fatigue:

- Anti-fatigue matting – provides a cushion between the floor surface and an individual's body for those who have to stand for lengthy periods
- Ergonomic equipment – includes a variety of office equipment from monitor risers, keyboard rests, footrests, etc. to electric staplers, staple removers, scissors, and hole punches
- Stand-lean stools – allows an individual to adjust their position and help them to lean to relieve strain from standing or sitting too long
- Walkers and scooters – to help those with mobility issues who do not use a wheelchair, but struggle with walking
- Wheelchairs or elevated wheelchairs – capable of being adjusted by height and can recline
- Modified workspace – can include modifying a workstation so that it is closer to a break room, restroom, office equipment, or employee parking lot as well as adopting communication alternatives such as teleconference, instant messaging, text messaging, etc. Other modifications include office remodeling (i.e. de-cluttering, relocating to a more private area, higher cubicle walls) to aid in his/her concentration.
- Accommodations could also include things such as a flexible schedule, periodic rest breaks, and job restructuring.

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Executive Functioning Deficits

These include cognitive abilities such as the ability to plan, organize and strategize, and pay attention to and remember details.

- Apps/software for concentration and memory
- Environmental sound or white noise machines/tinnitus maskers
- Speech recognition or form-generating software
- Full spectrum or natural lighting products
- Noise-canceling earbuds or headsets
- Recorded directives, messages, materials
- Technology reminders and checklists
- Sound absorption and soundproof panels
- Sun boxes and lights/sun-simulating desk lamps
- Timers and watches
- Electronic calendars and planners
- Accommodations could also include things such as receiving written instructions, color-coded systems to keep track of work assignments, extra time to complete tasks, a flexible schedule, periodic rest breaks, job coaching, on-site mentoring, and job restructuring.

Respiratory Distress/Breathing Problems

Appropriate accommodations can vary depending on the underlying condition (i.e. allergies, asthma, bronchitis, etc.), its severity, and the triggers that could heighten the respiratory issues.

- Air cleaners & purifiers
- Alternative cleaning supplies
- Carpet alternatives, sealants, and sustainable flooring
- Low/no odor paints and stains
- Odor/fragrance/chemical masks
- Personal air cleaner (worn around your neck)
- Powered air purifying respirator (PAPR)
- Respirator masks
- Accommodations could also include things such as a flexible schedule, working remotely from another location, or working from home.

Temperature Sensitivity

Sensitivity can be to either a cold or hot work environment.

- Air deflectors
- Cold resistant gloves
- Cooling clothing
- Heated clothing or gloves
- Heated ergonomic and computer products
- Portable air conditioners or fans
- Vent covers
- Workstation space heaters
- Accommodations could also include things such as a flexible schedule, working remotely from another location, or working from home.

5 Steps to Accommodations (aka the Interactive Process):

1. **Define the Situation** – consider your job responsibilities and work environment, as well as any side effects that might impact your ability to work and how they might change over time
2. **Explore Available Assistive Technology Options** – speak with an AT specialist or use JAN’s Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR), to search for accommodation ideas
3. **Choose the Assistive Technology**
4. **Implement the Assistive Technology** – make sure the technology works, access needed, training, etc.
5. **Monitor and Upgrade the Assistive Technology** – monitor the assistive technology to make sure it works effectively for you, and communicate with your employer if any changes are needed

For information about reasonable accommodations:

- Job Accommodation Network (askjan.org)
- Checklist: Reasonable Accommodations (TriageHealth.org/quick-guides/checklist-gettingorganized)
- Animated video on Managing Side Effects at Work (TriageCancer.org/Video-SideEffectsatWork)
- ADA Information: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (eeoc.gov)
- Triage Health Employment Resources (TriageHealth.org/employment)

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