Successful return to work programming for Long Covid February 2023







#### Our Vision

To achieve altogether better health for all, in every community across Aotearoa.

#### Our Purpose

We support people in their communities to optimise health and live their best lives.

Altogether better health for your best life





120 sites across the country



800 staff and many more contractors across:

- Physiotherapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Psychology
- Counselling
- Occupational Health Nursing
- Health Navigators
- Health Coaches
- Dietitians
- Medical Specialists



6000+ employers, ACC and individuals



#### What is Vocational Rehabilitation?

- Interdisciplinary team support for return to function, focussed on work
- Assessing Job tasks from a physical, cognitive and emotional perspective
- Identifying barriers, limitations, and opportunities
- Plan formulation graduated return to work
- Implementation, monitoring and fine tuning



### **Key to success**

- Engaging early!
- Accommodation
- Awareness: understanding the full picture: background, current, future
- Recognising the client as an individual
- Effective communication
- Health and Wellness Support:
   Physiotherapy, mental health support,
   nutrition and wellness resources, cultural support





# **Optimal Employee Journey and wellness ecosystem**

- Pre employment screening
- Annual Health Monitoring
- Health and Safety Inititatives
- Wellness focus
- EAP Services
- Workplace Assessments / Task Analysis
- Early Intervention programmes
- Injury Management



## Case Study – a common example

- Diagnosed with covid in July '22
- 6 months of persistent chest pain, nerve pain at a previous surgical site, fatigue, breathlessness/cough and poor sleep.
- Complicated medical history with previous Ca, pre diabetic, reflux and Arthritis.
- @ First appointment working 9-12noon. Then needed to sleep. Poor exercise/activity tolerance with elevated heart rate, breathlessness, chest pain and fatigue.



# **Case Study – Outline of programme**

- Pacing advice and education for home <u>and</u> work
- Education of energy systems of the body
- Dietitian input with focus on fatigue and decreased physical activity
- Exercise review: periodised plan and education incl. work demands
- Breathing techniques, advice and eduction
- Goal: to be able to return to work without breathlessness – maintain talking while standing, present confidently.



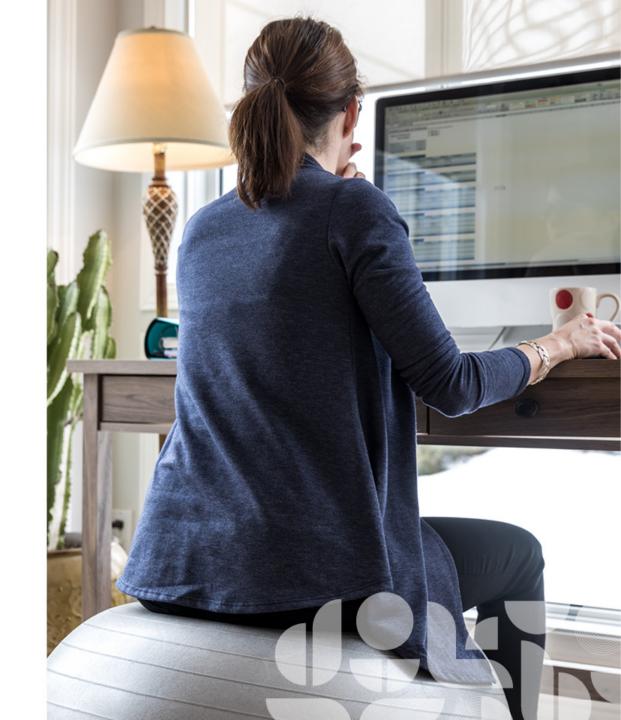


## Case Study – RTW plan

- Managing symptoms Work hours initially remained at 3 per day
- Removal of afternoon sleep replaced with breathing exercises and relaxation techniques
- Addition of light afternoon activity
- Balance of increasing work hours and exercise tolerance (grouped)
- Breathing exercises progressed to standing with focus to control breathing while talking
- Over 8 weeks work hours are now 8.30 to 4pm (1 hour less that pre Covid)

#### **Action Points**

- Recognise that return to work within COVID-19 and other presentations is complex!
- Engage <u>early</u>
- Vocational Rehabilitation has clear ROI (90% +)
- EAP Services with a wellness and movement health focus has an additional benefit
- By working together employers and employees can help ensure safe and successful return to work for those with long COVID.





# Thank you!

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