

## You are an important resource

No one with a rheumatic disease would like to be reduced to the disease only. You as the employer plays an important role in this setting, not only as the boss, but also as a fellow human being.

You can help create acceptance and allow room for everyone in the workplace. Right now, you can make a decisive difference to the person who gave you this leaflet.



## Rheumatic diseases have many faces

There are more than 200 rheumatic diseases and people do not react equally to the various diseases. That means that two people with the same diagnosis may have completely different needs for help and support, and that they need different medical treatments. Rheumatic diseases can be treated but cannot be cured. The treatment does not eliminate the disease, but keeps it at as low a level as possible.

It is therefore important that, as an employer, together with your employee you find the best solutions.

## Thanks for reading this leaflet

 Danish Centre for Expertise in Rheumatology



## Dear employer

You have received this leaflet because one of your employees has a rheumatic disease and because it is important that you both can talk openly about it.

Having been diagnosed with a rheumatic disease may cause concerns for the patient and may be life changing for the patient, as a rheumatic disease is a chronic condition.

Once the diagnosis is established, it sometimes takes some time to find the best medical treatment for the patient. It may also take some time to create the best conditions for living with the disease.

Each individual reacts differently to the medications and, in some cases, medical treatment has to be adjusted, to find just the right medication that works for the individual.

It is important that both you, as an employer, and your employee acknowledge that there are considerations to be made because of the disease. However, it is equally important to be able to maintain one's identity as an employee on an equal footing with other employees.

## Dear employer

I have been diagnosed with a  
**RHEUMATIC DISEASE**

  
Danish Centre for Expertise in Rheumatology

  
Danish Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases

Engelshøjgade 9 A | DK-6400 Sønderborg | Phone +45 73 65 40 00  
[www.centerforvidenmigt.dk/en](http://www.centerforvidenmigt.dk/en)



## What you need to know about rheumatic disease

Often one cannot tell from the outside that a person has a rheumatic disease. It can therefore be difficult for families, colleagues or one's employer to understand that the employee may have special needs.

Rheumatic diseases can fluctuate from day to day and therefore vary in the way they affect the employee. This can mean that, on one day, a person with a rheumatic disease may be very tired and may have pain or trouble standing and walking. The next day or week it might look completely different and symptoms may have subsided.

Living with a rheumatic disease means that one has to practise to be prepared to adapt in line with how the condition fluctuates. This also means that there is a need for you, as an employer, to try to be just as adaptable and flexible in relation to the employee. In addition to the disadvantages caused by the disease, the employee can have a number of additional complications which are challenging:

- They often experience an overwhelming tiredness (fatigue), stiffness or pain, which can be felt during the day or around the clock. The fatigue that can accompany a rheumatic disease is impossible to sleep off. However, being able to take short breaks during the working day can make a big difference.
- Pain and fatigue can have an effect on one's concentration and ability to being on top of things.
- It may also be that the employee has difficulty performing – or that it is getting harder and harder to perform – certain tasks, for example, driving, standing for a long time, or holding small objects/tools.

## What can you do as an employer?

The list below can be used to start your conversation with your employee:

- How can you help to ensure that the employee can go for check-ups at the hospital? In the beginning there may be several visits – later, when the rheumatic disease is stable, there will be regular check-ups that can be planned more in advance.
- Rather than taking breaks at fixed times, the employee may need an opportunity to take breaks as and when they are needed.
- Are there any occupational therapy aids or tools that can make everyday life easier for the employee? Some you can buy yourself, and you can apply to get others through the employee's local authority.\*
- Is it possible to set some tasks at different times, when your employee is fresh and less challenged by the illness?
- Are there workflows that can be changed a little, so that it will be easier for the employee to cope with the working day?
- How can you together manage sick days? When you have a rheumatic disease, you have a significantly increased disease risk and, in accordance with legislation, employers can be reimbursed by the local authority from the first sick day\*\*
- The employer has a number of opportunities to initiate support options. This requires making an enquiry to the local authority and a dialogue about the specific long-lasting functional impairments caused by the employee's rheumatic disease, which can be alleviated by way of various support schemes\*\*

\* Contact your municipality for further information.

\*\* The agreement must be approved by the sickness benefits office in the employee's local authority. You will find a form at [www.borger.dk](http://www.borger.dk), which you and your employee fill in jointly.

