

What is a Functional Assessment for an injured worker?

A functional assessment (FA) is a process of assessing an individual's physical and functional abilities related to the persons' ability to work.

The FA is a sequence of tests that objectively assesses an individual's ability to perform certain tasks in relation to activities of daily living and/or work related tasks.

The results of the FA are used, together with other relevant information, to help plan collaboratively a successful return to work.

This information has been provided to you by the Functional Assessment Network (FAN)

For further information contact:

Susan Strong

**McMaster University
School of Rehabilitation Science
IAHS
1400 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON, L8S 1C7**

strongs@mcmaster.ca

Copies of all materials can be found at:

<http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/rehab/research/currentactivities.html>

Functional Assessments for Injured Workers:

What You should know



When should I consider a Functional Assessment?

FAs can play an important role in assisting workers to return to work. Return to work efforts may have come to a stand still or a worker may have reached a plateau, and new information is needed to take a fresh look at the situation. FAs offer objective information to assist with a plan to move forward.

Functional assessments can be a helpful tool to...

- ✍ Understand the injured worker's abilities related to a job.
- ✍ Determine work suitability or job modification.
- ✍ Assist with graduated return to work or rehabilitation planning.
- ✍ Allow workers to explore their own abilities concerning work.

Functional Assessments should not be used solely to determine if the worker is sincere, cooperating or giving forth their best effort to returning to work. They should be used together with other relevant information as part of a comprehensive disability management practice.

What is the FA process?

- ✍ Before a referral is sent, the worker completes a signed consent to identify who is to receive a copy of the report.
- ✍ The physician completes a medical release to determine if the worker is able to participate in the FA activities.
- ✍ Before the assessment, information is shared with the assessor about the work demands and work environment.
- ✍ The testing is completed by trained professionals.
- ✍ FAs can be performed in many different places such as at clinics, homes or even in the workplace, generally over a two day period.
- ✍ The assessor or assessment team will complete a report that will provide: a professional opinion, recommendations and a summary of workers' abilities, limitations and barriers to returning to work.
- ✍ A copy of the report should be provided to the worker.

What should happen before an FA?

What goes on before and after the FA is just as important as what occurs during the functional assessment. Efforts should be taken to try to eliminate as many barriers as possible and address misconceptions before the FA is conducted. For an effective FA process, there needs to be respectful dialogue, collaboration and trust between the workers and parties involved from the beginning. This interactive communication ensures a safe and effective functional assessment.

What can you expect from an FA?

- ✍ Independent information for return to work planning and disability management.
- ✍ Concrete suggestions to address employer's duty to accommodate.
- ✍ Identification of barriers with respect to return to work.
- ✍ Objective information about the worker's abilities related to a job.
- ✍ Reduced gaps and expanded options for return to work.
- ✍ Suggestions to return the worker to maximum productivity.