

From the Local Government Employers Organisation Guide to Absence Management

A-Z of Causes of Sickness Absence

Instructions

These guidance notes explain how to record the different causes of sickness absence for monitoring purposes

It is recommended that all absences in an authority should be self-categorised or categorised by either HR personnel, or line managers, but not a mixture of these groups, so as to reduce inconsistencies. It is recognised that different authorities will have different procedures for recording absence and so different groups will be responsible for categorising the causes of sickness absence. Where possible, however, it is recommended that self-categorisation be permitted as this will encourage employees to provide meaningful information.

In selecting which types of absence to include, authorities should:

Exclude absences for dental and medical appointments, maternity leave and disability leave
Absence for fertility treatment and cosmetic surgery should only be included when the absence was taken as sickness absence and not some other form of leave (e.g. annual leave, unpaid leave etc.)

All instances of sickness absence to be included as outlined above, should be allocated to one of the following groups:

Back & neck problems

Other musculo-skeletal problems

Stress, depression, anxiety, neurasthenia, mental health & fatigue

Infections; to include colds and flu.

Neurological; to include headaches and migraine.

Genito-urinary; to include menstrual problems.

Pregnancy related

Stomach, liver, kidney & digestion; to include gastroenteritis.

Heart, blood pressure & circulation

Chest & respiratory; to include chest infections.

Eye, ear, nose & mouth/dental; to include sinusitis

Other

- For all absences allocate where possible to the category containing the part of the body affected. For example, absence due to back pain should be allocated to the category "Back & neck problems".
- For infections, allocate where possible to the part of the body that is infected, otherwise allocate to "Infections". For example, an ear infection should be allocated to the category "Eye, Ear, Nose and Mouth/Dental" rather than to the category "Infection", whereas shingles should be allocated to "Infections" as it is not specific to any one part of the body.
- Absences caused by more than one illness should be allocated to the illness that predominates
- If absences are not being self-categorised and the employee has provided a number of causes, use the first item listed.
- Any musculo-skeletal problem that effects the back or neck must be assigned to the "Back & Neck category". If it effects any other part of the body it should be assigned to the "Other musculo-skeletal problems" category. This is why there is a choice of the two categories by some conditions on the A-Z list.

There are 36 following pages which provide an alphabetical list of possible causes of absence and the group to which they should be allocated. There then follows an alphabetical list of possible causes of absence for each of the different absence categories used in this classification.

If there is a situation where a medical note is **illegible** it should be noted that the patient has a right to ring the medical centre or doctor to clarify what is says.