

Telling your employer

You don't have to tell your employer everything — here is how to decide what to share, when, and how to protect yourself while you recover.

Understanding the diagnosis

Educational draft. Clinical review pending. Quotations retained from the original text are not verified member testimonials.

Telling your employer about a heart diagnosis is not a medical step — it is a practical and emotional one, and it is entirely yours to time and shape.

Some people tell their manager the day they find out; others wait months or never share more than “a health procedure.” Both are legitimate. What you share is a decision, not a duty — and the right answer depends on your work, your relationship with your employer, and how much recovery will affect your job.

What you actually need to decide

- What to share — a diagnosis is not a quota. “I am having treatment for a heart condition and will need some time off” is a complete sentence. Details of your arteries belong to you and your team, not your HR file.
- When to share it — most people tell their employer once they know their treatment plan, because that is when you can give dates. A plan with dates is more reassuring than a diagnosis without one.
- Who to tell — one person, usually your direct manager or HR, is enough. Telling the whole office by accident is a risk worth planning around.

What employers usually need

In most workplaces, what the employer needs is three things: a rough timeline, a plan for your work while you are away, and a return-to-work date you can adjust as recovery progresses. Not your scan results. Not your ejection fraction. A letter from your team covering the basics — expected recovery time, any temporary restrictions, when you can return — is usually all the medical detail anyone needs.

Rights and laws differ from country to country — sick leave, medical certificates, and protections around health information vary, so check what applies in your country and your workplace. In many places your medical information is protected, and an employer is only entitled to what is needed to manage your absence.

The honest conversation

If your job involves physical work, driving or long hours, ask your team what your recovery actually allows — then tell your employer the truth in those terms: what you can do, when, and what help you need in between. Most people find that a short, honest conversation — “here is the plan, here is how we will handle it” — works better than either silence or oversharing. And you are allowed to say no to questions you do not want to answer.

“I told my manager: I need surgery, here are the dates, here is my handover plan. She never asked for a single detail beyond that — and I kept the scary parts for my family and my doctors, where they belonged.”

What to ask your team (for work)

- What does my recovery realistically allow — driving, lifting, travel, hours?
- Can I have a letter covering expected time off and any temporary restrictions?
- When is it safe to return, and what should my first weeks back look like?

Take it to your team

Your team cannot tell you whether to tell your employer — but they can tell you what recovery will demand, and that is the information that makes the conversation manageable. Ask for the letter; keep your questions about work separate from your questions about your heart.

How much of your story you share with work is your call, and nobody else's. The medical decisions, as always, belong to you and your team — the rest of the world only needs to know what you choose to show it.

Questions to take to my team

☐ What does my recovery realistically allow — driving, lifting, travel, hours?

☐ Can I have a letter covering expected time off and any temporary restrictions?

☐ When is it safe to return, and what should my first weeks back look like?

For discussion and personal reference. Your care team's individual instructions take priority. For an emergency, contact your local emergency service; do not wait for a community reply.