

Navigating PMR:

PMR at Work

Navigate work with PMR, including managing symptoms on the job, communicating your needs, and understanding your rights.

This guide is for general information only and does not replace advice from your doctor or care team. Always talk with your healthcare provider before making changes to your exercise, diet, or treatment plan.



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Essential Guide for Everyday Management

About this Guide

Living with polymyalgia rheumatica (PMR) can make the workday harder in ways others may not easily see. Fatigue, morning stiffness, pain, and unpredictable flares are real challenges.

This guide will help you understand your rights, ask for what you need, talk to your employer or coworkers, and make informed decisions about your work life.

Know Your Rights

If you are employed, you may have legal protections that can help you stay at work and do your job well. Laws vary by state and employer. It is always a good idea to check with your Human Resources (HR) department or consult an employment attorney if you have questions.

In the United States, two main laws may apply to you:

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) https://www.ada.gov/topics/intro-to-ada/	Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/benefits-leave/fmla
• Applies to employers with 15 or more employees. • Requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations unless it causes significant difficulty or expense. • PMR may qualify as a disability under the ADA because it substantially limits major life activities.	• Applies to employers with 50 or more employees. • Allows up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave per year for serious health conditions. • Can be used intermittently for flares, appointments, or treatment side effects.

Helpful Resources:

<https://adata.org/factsheet/reasonable-accommodations-workplace>

<https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/benefits-leave/fmla>



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Talking to Your Employer

Deciding What to Share

You are not required to tell your employer your exact diagnosis. However, sharing some information may help you get the support you need. Here are things to consider:

- You do not have to say "I have polymyalgia rheumatica." You can simply say you have a chronic health condition that affects your mobility and energy.
- To request a formal accommodation under the ADA, you will need to provide some medical documentation, but not your full medical history.
- Your HR department is required to keep medical information confidential.

How to Request Accommodations

When talking to your employer about what you need, try to focus on solutions, not just problems. Be specific and clear about how the change will help you do your job better.

Examples of What to Say





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Documenting Your Request

After any conversation with your employer about accommodations, send a follow-up email to create a written record. Here is a simple template:

Subject: Follow-Up: Accommodation Request

Hi [Name],

Thank you for speaking with me today about my health-related accommodation needs. To summarize what we discussed: [briefly describe what was requested and what was agreed upon].

Please let me know if you need any additional information or documentation from my doctor. I appreciate your support.

Best regards,
[Your Name]



Getting Medical Documentation

Your doctor can provide a letter that describes your limitations and recommended accommodations without sharing your full medical details. When you ask your doctor for a letter, try to bring a list of your requested accommodations. The letter may include:

- A statement that you have a medical condition that affects your ability to perform certain tasks
- The specific limitations caused by your condition (for example, difficulty standing for long periods or significant morning stiffness)
- Recommended workplace accommodations
- An estimate of how long accommodations may be needed



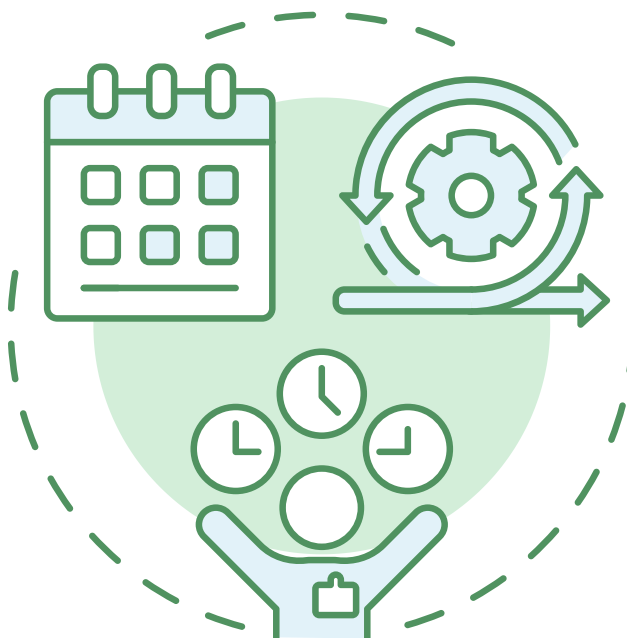
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Examples of Workplace Accommodations

Every job is different, and every person with PMR has different needs. Here are some common accommodations that may help:

Type	Examples
Schedule	Flexible start time; modified or reduced hours; split shifts; intermittent FMLA leave for flares or appointments
Location	Work-from-home options; nearby parking; elevator access; ground-floor workspace
Physical Setup	Adjustable-height desk; ergonomic chair; footrest; anti-fatigue mat; voice recognition software
Task Adjustments	Reduced lifting or physical demands; reassignment of strenuous tasks; seated alternatives to standing work
Breaks	Short, frequent rest breaks to stretch and move; private space to rest if needed during the day



PMR affects people differently. Some people continue working full-time with accommodations. Others reduce their hours. And some need to step back from work temporarily or permanently.

Whatever you decide, it is a valid choice. Be kind to yourself as you figure out what works for you.



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Talking With Your Supervisor

Talking about a chronic health condition can feel uncomfortable, especially at work. You may not know how much to share, or you may worry about how others will react. These conversation starters are designed to help. Use them as a starting point and adjust the wording to feel natural to you.



Requesting a schedule change:

You might say:

“I have a chronic health condition that causes significant stiffness in the mornings. My symptoms tend to improve as the day goes on. Would it be possible to shift my start time to 9:30 or 10:00 a.m.? I’m happy to discuss how we can make this work while still meeting team needs.”

Explaining a flare or an off day:

You might say:

“I want to give you a heads-up that I’m having a harder day than usual with my health condition. I’m still committed to getting my work done, but I may need to take a short break or work a bit more slowly today. I wanted you to know so it doesn’t come as a surprise.”

Asking for a formal accommodation:

You might say:

“I’d like to formally request some accommodations to help me do my best work. My doctor has written a letter explaining my limitations. I was hoping we could set up a time to review the request together and talk through next steps.”

Following up on a previous request:

You might say:

“I wanted to check in on the accommodation request I submitted a few weeks ago. I understand these things take time, but I wanted to make sure it hadn’t gotten lost in the shuffle. Is there anything additional you need from me?”



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Talking With Coworkers



You are never required to explain your health situation to coworkers. You do not need to mention that you have a condition at all. But if you want to say something, here are some ways to address common situations:

When someone notices you moving slowly or struggling:

You might say:

“Thanks for asking. I have a condition that affects my joints and energy levels, especially in the mornings. I’m okay — I just need to pace myself sometimes. I appreciate your understanding.”

When someone asks why you have a different schedule or work from home:

You might say:

“I want to give you a heads-up that I’m having a harder day than usual with my health condition. I’m still committed to getting my work done, but I may need to take a short break or work a bit more slowly today. I wanted you to know so it doesn’t come as a surprise.”

When you need to say no to something physical (carrying, standing for long periods, etc.):

You might say:

“Thanks for thinking of me — I’m not able to do a lot of [lifting/standing/walking] right now because of a health condition I’m managing. Is there another way I can help with this instead?”

When someone makes a comment about you sitting down or resting:

You might say:

“I have a chronic condition that causes a lot of joint pain and fatigue. Sitting or taking short breaks is actually part of how I manage it and stay functional throughout the day.”

When you want to share more about what PMR is:

You might say:

“I have something called polymyalgia rheumatica — it’s a condition that causes inflammation in the muscles around my shoulders, hips, and neck. It can cause a lot of stiffness and pain, especially in the morning. The good news is it’s treatable, but it takes time to get under control.”

What if the conversation does not go well?

Most employers and coworkers will respond with understanding. But if that does not happen, here are some options:

- Contact your HR department if your supervisor is not responding appropriately to a legitimate accommodation request.
- File a complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) if you believe your rights under the ADA are being violated. Visit eeoc.gov or call 1-800-669-4000.
- Consult an employment attorney if you need guidance on your specific situation. Many offer free initial consultations.

YOUR RESOURCE FOR PMR INFORMATION AND UPDATES

Learn more at [GHLF.org/LivePMR](https://ghlf.org/LivePMR)
or scan the QR code!



You can use your phone's
camera to scan the code!

