

Facts worth knowing about sickness absence (Krankenstand)

The purpose of this translated information sheet is to assist your comprehension.

Together with sickness benefit, sickness absence is an important social security benefit. They both ensure that patients can make a full recovery without great financial loss.

Precondition: Inability to work

- **Inability to work**

A precondition for sickness absence is the diagnosis by a doctor of sickness and associated inability to work. Not every sickness automatically leads to sickness absence. For example, a teacher with a disease of the vocal cords will be unable to work, while a draughtsman will probably be able to carry on working.

- **Sick certificate**

The doctor providing treatment is responsible for issuing a sick certificate and notifying the Styrian district health insurance fund (STGKK). In most cases this is the family doctor, but hospital specialists and outpatient clinics can also issue sick certificates. The sick certificate from a doctor of one's own choosing must be submitted to the STGKK immediately for it to be accepted. You are automatically on sickness absence if you admitted to a hospital, health resort or rehab clinic.

Please note: You must inform your employer of your sickness absence. As a basic principle, the employer must be notified immediately of sickness absence.

- **Beginning of sickness absence**

Sickness absence begins on the day the doctor diagnoses that you are unable to work because of a specific illness. Backdating the sick certificate by one working day is possible only for good reasons.

Recovery takes precedence

- **Duty of disclosure**

The patient must tell the doctor if the illness is:

- because of an occupational illness, an accident at work or any other accident;
- because of an affray; or
- because of alcohol or drug abuse.

During sickness absence, the patient must be contactable by the STGKK at the address stated on the sick certificate. Any change of address must be notified immediately. You must have the STGKK's consent to live outside Austria.

- **Conduct during sickness absence**

The doctor's instructions must be obeyed during sickness absence. This relates in particular to the bed rest ordered and the going-out times stated by the doctor on the sick certificate. On top of this, anything preventing recovery must be avoided. Infringement of these rules may result in sanctions, including suspension of sickness benefit.

Arranging an examination

- **Chief physician and patient inspection**

The STGKK must visit the patient and may also ask him to visit the chief physician for an examination. The patient must let the claim inspectors into his/her home so that they can obtain the information required and must visit the chief physician if asked. If an appointment cannot be arranged for health reasons, appropriate confirmation must be obtained from the doctor providing treatment. Failure to attend the chief physician's examination without good reason may result in sanctions, including stoppage of continued remuneration and suspension of sickness benefit.

The STGKK invites a percentage of patients to a chief physician's examination. The necessity and length of sickness absence can be verified by the doctor providing treatment. A request to visit the chief physician is not of course necessary if you have recovered from sickness (please notify the district health insurance fund if this is the case) and resume work.

Necessity of medical confirmation

- **Duration of sickness absence**

Sickness absence lasts only as long as the patient is unable to work and he/she is receiving medical treatment for the illness. Problems will arise if patients prolong their sickness absence "by themselves" and without consulting a doctor. This also happens if the doctor has not declared an actual duration of sickness and the patient is on sickness absence longer than necessary. In case of doubt, medical confirmation must be obtained that illness really lasted as long as the sickness absence.

- **Sickness benefit**

Financial benefits provided by employers are regulated differently in respect of sickness. Continued remuneration may end if sickness absence continues for some time, at which point the STGKK pays sickness benefit.

- **Notification of intention to return to work**

The doctor providing treatment is responsible for the notification of intention to return to work. But under certain conditions the patient may also submit this notification him/herself, e.g. online: www.stgkk.at. In the event of a stay in a health resort or convalescent home, this notification is issued on the day of discharge.

- **Sickness absence certificate**

Sickness absence must be proven by the employer by means of a sickness absence certificate. Such a certificate may also be issued and sent online.

**If anything is unclear or you require further information,
please call us on: 0316/8035-3000**

Kind regards
STEIERMÄRKISCHE GEBIETSKRANKENKASSE