SCARSTORIES · A LITTLE COMPANY ON THE WAY

Should you keep working?

Work during the wait is different for everyone — for some it's an anchor, for others it's the thing that's breaking them. Here's how to decide, and what to ask.

Preparing and waiting

> Educational content.

Should you keep working while you wait? There is no universal answer, because it depends on three things: what your symptoms allow, what your job demands of you, and what your team advises. Most people land somewhere in between — working with adjustments, rather than stopping completely or pushing through blindly.

What most people find

- Many people keep working, and say the routine and the company of colleagues genuinely help them through the wait.
- Many others reduce hours or shift to lighter tasks, and find the same relief.
- A smaller number stop — either on their team's advice or because their job is physical or safety-critical.

All three are normal. The danger is not choosing: drifting into "I'll just push through" for weeks, or stopping suddenly without a plan and watching the silence eat at you.

Signs it's time to talk about adjusting or stopping

- Symptoms appear at work — chest discomfort, breathlessness, dizziness — especially with physical effort or stress.
- Your job involves safety-critical tasks: driving, machinery, heights, long shifts, heavy lifting. Fatigue and a racing mind are a dangerous combination in these roles.
- You're exhausted before the day even starts, and work has stopped being an anchor and become the main source of the load.
- You're hiding symptoms to avoid questions — a sign the situation has moved past "coping".

The practical side

Talk to your employer early, even before you have every answer. In most places there are provisions for medical leave or adjusted duties — and asking "what's possible" is not the same as committing to anything. One honest conversation with a manager or HR, and one with your team, removes most of the guessing.

The emotional side

Work is part of identity for many of us, and stopping — even temporarily — can feel like losing a piece of yourself. If you stop, keep the day shaped: meals at the right time, a walk, a task. And if you keep working, watch for the point where it stops helping. The question isn't "what would a strong person do". It's "what lets me get to my date in the best shape".

> **Take it to your team**
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> Ask directly: is it safe for me to keep working in my role? Are there specific tasks I should avoid — lifting, driving, long shifts? If I stop, how will that affect my treatment or recovery? Their answers, not your guesses, should set the limit.

> **Call for help if**
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> If symptoms hit you at work — chest pain or pressure, breathlessness, feeling you might faint — stop what you're doing and call for help. Do not push through to prove anything. Work can wait; you cannot be replaced at home.

> I told my manager I needed to step back from driving duties for a few weeks. He didn't blink. I'd built the conversation up for a month — it took four minutes.

A last word

Whatever you decide — keep working, adjust, or stop — decide it with your team and your employer, not alone at 2am. The decision is reversible; beating yourself up about it isn't part of any treatment plan. And in the end, the limits on what you can safely do belong to your own medical team.

Questions to take to my team

- [ ] Can I continue my current work safely while waiting, and what adjustments do I need?

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.