To claim JSA you must be able to work, be available for work and actively seeking work. If you are sick and not fit for work for a short period during your claim it may not always affect your claim.

If you are sick and not fit for work you can keep claiming JSA if you have:

- two short periods of sickness of up to 14 days in any jobseeking period, or within each successive 12-month period if your jobseeking period lasts longer than 12 months, or
- a third or longer period of sickness of up to 13 weeks in a fixed 12-month period starting from the first date of your sickness. We call this an “Extended Period of Sickness”. You must have medical evidence if you are sick for longer than two weeks, and you can only have one Extended Period of Sickness in any 12-month period.

Your work coach can tell you the exact dates that make up the time we call your “jobseeking period”.

Continuing to claim JSA can have a number of advantages:

- Your benefit payments will not be disrupted - including payment of any “passported” benefits, such as Housing Benefit, that you may be claiming.
- You will not have to apply for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and then reclaim JSA when you are no longer sick.
- You will also stay in touch with your work coach who can provide you with advice and support to return to work as soon as you are well enough.

What to do if you need an Extended Period of Sickness
If you are likely to be sick for more than two weeks you will need to provide supporting medical evidence from the eighth day of your sickness period to the end of it. If you expected to be better within two weeks but find you are still sick you will need to provide supporting medical evidence – such as a statement of fitness for work (called a “fit note”) signed by your GP or other health professional – as soon as possible, and dated no later than day 15 of your sickness period. You must send your supporting medical evidence to your work coach as soon as you can.

If you do not provide supporting medical evidence you will be expected to be available for work and actively seeking work to keep claiming JSA.

What to do if you want to claim ESA
If you would like to claim Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) instead of JSA you may be able to do this. You should talk to your work coach who can help you decide what to do.

Some people may find that they stay on JSA with an Extended Period of Sickness but do not get better as quickly as they hoped.
If you volunteer to stay on JSA but then go on to claim, and are entitled to ESA, you will have the period during which you will receive the initial basic rate of ESA, known as the assessment phase, reduced by the length of time you have spent on an Extended Period of Sickness.

These changes also apply if you are on the Work Programme.

**What happens next (if you want to keep claiming JSA)**
If you are sick and want to stay on JSA you will need to talk to your work coach.

Your work coach will discuss your sickness or health condition and agree with you what you are able to do to look for work over the period you are sick. The actions you agree will be recorded and your work coach will keep in touch with you while you are sick. If you do not do the things you have agreed to do to look for work you may lose your benefit.

You will be given form JSA28. You should complete the form and return the tear-off slip to the Jobcentre. This form will cover up to the first 14 days of your sickness period. If you are likely to be sick for more than two weeks you will need to provide supporting medical evidence from the eighth day of your sickness period to the end of it. If you expected to be better within two weeks but find you are still sick you will need to provide supporting medical evidence as soon as possible, and dated no later than day 15 of your sickness period. You must send your supporting medical evidence to your work coach as soon as you can.

If you have a fit note from your doctor and it runs out before your sickness ends you will need to arrange to see your doctor again to get another fit note. You must also tell the Jobcentre that you are still sick and send them your fit note as soon as you can.

If you are better sooner than you thought you must tell your work coach.

**What happens next (if you are on the Work Programme)**
If you are on the Work Programme you will need to tell your Work Programme Provider and the Jobcentre that you are sick.

The Jobcentre will contact you to discuss your sickness or health condition and agree what you are able to do to look for work while you are sick.

The Jobcentre work coach will ask your Work Programme Provider to contact you to discuss your Action Plan and agree any actions you need to take while you are sick.

If you do not do the things you have agreed to do to look for work you may lose your benefit.

You will need to send your fit note(s) to the work coach in the Jobcentre. The work coach will contact you before your fit note ends and will tell your Work Programme Provider when you are no longer sick. Your Work Programme Provider will discuss your Action Plan with you and agree the actions you need to take.

**What happens if you are sick for more than 13 weeks?**
If you are still sick and unfit for work after 13 weeks you will no longer be able to claim JSA. You should talk to your work coach.
What do you need to do if you change your mind?
If you decide to end your JSA claim during an Extended Period of Sickness you must tell your work coach. You can close your JSA claim by calling us on 0345 608 8545.

If you decide to claim Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) you should do so straightaway. When you claim ESA you must tell them the first date of your Extended Period of Sickness on JSA and the date your JSA claim ended.

What if your circumstances change while you are sick?
You will need to tell the Jobcentre about any changes of circumstances as they may affect your benefit.

What happens in JSA joint claims?
If you have a JSA joint claim, are sick and want to stay on JSA, you should talk to your work coach about how your claim will be affected.

What do you need to provide if you claim Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)?
If you decide to close your JSA claim before you are better and claim ESA instead you must tell Jobcentre Plus. You can close your JSA claim by calling us on 0345 608 8545.

You can then make a claim to ESA by calling 0800 055 6688. You should tell the person taking your ESA claim the first date of your Extended Period of Sickness during your JSA claim and the date your JSA claim ended.

This is because the time you have spent on the JSA Extended Period of Sickness may count towards the assessment phase of Employment and Support Allowance, depending on the outcome of your Work Capability Assessment.