Workers' Comp

Specialty Solutions Spotlight: Understanding Work Comp Injuries for New and Inexperienced Workers

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How do new worker injuries differ from more experienced worker injuries?

Newer workers are prone to more frequent injuries than their more experienced counterparts. Understanding why and how these injuries occur helps guide more effective claim management.

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New employees may feel unsure about their role, and an injury can heighten anxiety about job security and performance. Delays in treatment can increase added stress and lead to longer disability durations, increased risk of chronic pain, frustration and disengagement, and ultimately impede recovery and inflate medical costs. When care is timely and coordinated, many of these injuries can be resolved quickly and safely.

Common Inexperienced Worker Injuries

Often these injuries include back, shoulder and knee strains from improper lifting. Misunderstanding body mechanics, lifting techniques, physical demands, or repetitive motion stressors can lead to sprains, strains, fractures, slips and falls. Hand injuries and lacerations are also frequent for new employees who may not be fully comfortable with equipment or tools.

Why New Workers Get Hurt

- **Lack of training or muscle memory:** Even with formal training, it takes time to develop safe habits. Experienced workers move almost automatically in a safe way, while new workers have to think through

every step.
- **Overconfidence or hesitation:** Some new employees want to prove themselves and may take shortcuts. Others hesitate or second-guess themselves, leading to awkward movements or positioning.
- **Unfamiliar environments:** They may not recognize hazards like wet floors, uneven surfaces, heavy loads or fast-moving machinery.
- **Fatigue:** New workers may not be used to the physical demands of the job, leading to muscle fatigue and higher injury risk.
- **Fear of reporting or asking questions:** Workers may worry that reporting pain, asking for help or acknowledging restrictions could affect how they are perceived, creating treatment hesitation.

Early intervention and the right resources can significantly reduce claim duration and overall cost. Coupled with understanding and addressing the root of the incident ensures post recovery injuries are not exacerbated or prone to recur, promoting safer return-to-work.

Typical Treatment Pathways

Initial treatment can involve multiple services, clinical touchpoints, and recovery needs. Claims professionals may need to support both specialty referrals and case management interventions to keep treatment moving, address barriers early and guide safe return-to-work planning.

- **Durable Medical Equipment** (DME) such as back braces, knee braces, wrist splints, walking boots, crutches, or slings
- **Medical supplies** including wound care kits, compression garments, and hot/cold therapy units
- **Physical and occupational therapy** to restore strength and mobility
- **Diagnostics** such as X-rays, MRI, or nerve conduction studies
- **Home exercise equipment** for rehabilitation
- **Transportation** and **translation** for treatment access and communication
- **Return-to-work support services** including **functional capacity evaluations** (FCEs)
- **Field case management** for non-medical barriers, reinforced treatment recommendations and stakeholder communication
- **Job analysis** and **return-to-work coordination** to clarify job functions, align physical demands and transitional duty or accommodations

Achieving Faster Recovery

Optimal outcomes are achieved by authorizing care quickly, ensuring specialty products and services are delivered without delay, and engaging the right level of clinical oversight early. Claims professionals should also monitor progress and escalate issues when risk appears. Maintaining communication with the employer, provider, and injured employee regarding restrictions, modified duty options and a clear return-to-work plan is key.

When injuries are treated early, inflammation is controlled, strength is rebuilt, and fear of re-injury decreases. Employees who receive proper bracing, structured therapy, and clear guidance often return to modified duty within days or weeks rather than months. The goal is restoring confidence, function and productivity to ensure additional injuries don’t occur.

Utilizing Apricus specialty care coordination alongside field case management helps ensure injured employees receive the right support at the right time. Apricus can recommend best-fit, cost-effective products and services, facilitate orders, and schedule treatment, while field case management helps identify barriers to recovery,

reinforces the care plan, and supports communication among the injured employee, provider, employer, and claims team. Together, these capabilities create a coordinated path to recovery and return-to-work.

This information is meant to serve as a general overview, and any specific questions should be fully reviewed with a health care professional or specialty service provider.

To make a referral for all your specialty products and services, call us today at 877.203.9899 or send an email to apricus.referrals@enlyte.com.



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