



Berkley
INDUSTRIALCOMP

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Many Factors May
Prolong Injury
Healing (and What
You Can Do to Help)



MANY FACTORS MAY PROLONG INJURY HEALING

Are You Aware?

Many factors may prolong healing and affect employees' return to work after an injury or illness. A National Institute of Health study found that there are many contributions to the speed of recovery. This review primarily focused on musculoskeletal injuries resulting in neck and low back pain, an injury very common among high hazard industries.

While some factors such as age and physical health prior to injury are expected to prolong healing, other factors may be surprising. Common factors resulting in a positive and timely return to work included:

- Higher education and socioeconomic status
- Optimistic expectations for recovery
- Lower severity of the injury/illness
- Return-to-work coordination
- Multidisciplinary interventions that include workplace and stakeholders

However, negative return to work outcomes were affected by:

- Advanced age
- Gender (females reported slower recovery)
- Higher pain or disability
- Experiencing depression or anxiety
- Higher physical work demands
- Previous record of sick leave and unemployment
- Activity limitations

Are You Prepared?

With this information in mind, what can an employer do to encourage a timely healing and return to work for injured employees?

The best plan for aiding an employee's return to work is a modified duty plan. These plans can be customized for each individual situation. In general, a modified duty plan reduces the physical workload normally expected of the employee until they are clear to work again at their normal pace. The plan may allow for other jobs that are less physically demanding or it may reduce the workers' hours and gradually ease the employee back to a full-time status. By allowing employees to return to work sooner rather than later, companies



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reduce cost and improve employees' emotional and physical well-being. Which in turn, leads to faster healing.

What Next?

Continue to implement or improve your company's return to work plan for injured employees. As these employees return to their jobs, also be aware of other factors, such as depression, which may affect their healing.

In 2013, NIH reported, "Workers with occupational injury were more likely to become depressed than those with non-occupational injury." Another recent study has also concluded that depression and anxiety contribute to low back pain, even after an appropriate time period of healing.

By following through on an employee's healing process, employers may be able to help recognize or even prevent these issues. Make sure injured employees and their families are aware of the symptoms of depression and anxiety so an employee can seek appropriate help. Again, implementation of a modified duty program helps employees feel valued and needed again, despite their current limitations. This aids in combatting workplace depression following an injury.

The Berkley Industrial Comp Difference

Our RESOLUTION team is here to support you through every step of a workers' compensation claim. Through personal attention for every claim, we provide



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proactive and collaborative support. Our primary concern is seeing employees receive the care they need so they can return to work in a timely manner.

Through our Return to Work program, we can help you identify modified duty jobs in advance of need. After an incident, we are available to help prepare a modified job description for approval by the employee's physician of record. At Berkley Industrial Comp we recognize the benefits to both the employee and employer when an injured worker is able to get back to his job sooner, rather than later.

Berkley Industrial Comp is pleased to share this material with its customers. Please note, however, that nothing in this document should be construed as legal advice or the provision of professional consulting services. This material is for general informational purposes only, and while reasonable care has been utilized in compiling this information, no warranty or representation is made as to accuracy or completeness.



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