



PREVENTING INJURIES, INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY SINCE 2000.

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Your Employee as an Industrial Athlete

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What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “Industrial Athlete?” Maybe a concrete floor and metal buildings mixed with running shoes and jogging shorts? The industrial athlete is probably your friend, neighbor or coworker. He is someone who gets up every day and heads out to his playing field, which just happens to be the assembly line.

The concept of the industrial athlete can be defined as applying the principles of sports medicine to the evaluation and treatment of injured workers. This means bringing the health care provider to the shop floor. Making health care more available to employees makes good business sense and is a necessity for preventing and managing work injuries most efficiently. In a study reported by the National Athletic Trainer’s Association, employers who implemented an Early Injury Intervention program saw a return on investment ranging from \$3 to \$7. Half of those companies reported injury rates decreased by at least half and 68% said that restricted workdays and worker compensation claims for muscular disorders dropped by at least 25%.

Workplace athletic trainers (or early intervention specialists) can serve in several capacities ranging from simple first aid for minor cuts and abrasions to assessment and treatment of sprains and strains. They provide ergonomic assessments, post-offer employment testing, and assist in return to work programs. Additionally they support the company’s wellness program by providing coaching and support at the worksite.

Why should you start an Early Intervention Program? For those employees experiencing discomfort from repetitive work or overexertion, the trainer can assess the situation and make recommendations to prevent the discomfort from becoming an injury. The employee never has to leave the job site, schedule an appointment with an outside clinic or try to manage the situation on his own. Additionally the trainer follows up regularly to make sure the issue is resolving with minimal lost productivity. By providing first aid at work the incident never becomes an injury. This leads to lower OSHA recordable rates and reduced worker compensation costs.

Early Intervention Specialists also provide real time education regarding proper work techniques. This can range from instruction in good lifting techniques to advice on proper tool selection. Because training takes place at the workstation, not in a classroom, the trainer can use real world examples. This makes the instruction more relevant.

Overexertion injuries remain the number one cause of disabling work injuries. By using an early intervention specialist employers have reduced injury rates, saved worker compensation costs and provided a safer work environment for their most valuable resource- their employees. Adopting an “industrial athlete” mentality makes good business sense.