

BULLETIN

Work-related injuries

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Even though it hurts, Ive been working with a job-related injury. Recently, its been getting worse. When should I file a WCB claim? How do I decide whether to take time off work? Our department is short-staffed, and there will be no one to replace me if I stop working.



File a WCB claim right away. You do not have to miss any time from work before filing a WCB claim. Do not wait.

In fact, you should file a WCB claim as soon as you begin having work-related problems, such as numbness, tingling, or pain. In addition, see your doctor right away and have your doctor file a WCB claim form.

Then, if your claim is not accepted by WCB, file an appeal in every case, especially if you are uncertain about whether your symptoms or injury are significant enough to warrant a claim. You are far safer to err on the side of caution, because you may be experiencing a problem which seems minor at the time but which may later become more significant.

This is significant, because there are long-lasting consequences if you fail to file a claim. If you had a prior problem for which you saw a doctor or any health care professional, but did not file a claim, WCB may decide you have a pre-existing condition which is -not work-related" ... in which case, the most you will ever be able to get covered for by the WCB is acceptance of an aggravation of a pre-existing condition.

While you have one year to file your application for compensation with the WCB, you must notify your employer of your problems as soon as practicable.



Im in pain all day at work, and its getting worse. But I just cant take any time off. There is no one who can take my shifts. What would the employer do? Who would treat the patients?



HSA members have an astounding work ethic. HSA professionals will stay on the job, working through pain and disability. But you are risking your own well-being.

When you have an activity-related soft tissue disorder (ASTD) also known as an RSI (repetitive strain injury), your complaints will typically follow this pattern:

You are sore by the end of the day; you ice your wrist/arm/shoulder/back/neck at night and take Advil.

The next morning you are okay ... until late morning, when the symptoms come back, possibly even worse than before. But you don't take time off because there is no relief, and no one to fill in for you if you go.

Eventually, you are sore all week. You take the weekend to rest and ice the troubled area. You are okay by Monday morning, but by Monday afternoon you are sore again and you struggle through the rest of the week. You don't take any time off because there is no one to back fill your job.

Eventually, you are just counting the days until your vacation. You are taking three weeks off and are hoping that with rest and ice, you will be fine by the time you come back. Indeed, you may be fine by the time you return to work, but it doesn't take long until you are hurting again.

What happens at the end of the road?

The worst case scenario is that your soft tissue injury never recovers again. Many people do not realise that these ASTDs are more insidious than broken bones. The pain and the weakness may never go away if you let it go on too long without proper treatment.

Tragically, HSA has more than its share of permanently disabled members who can never return to their chosen professions.

HSAs WCB staff work with members every day who gave too much of themselves to their profession.

At hearing after hearing, those employers ...for whom HSA members sacrificed their bodies ... argue emphatically that the injured HSA members tendinitis/epicondylitis/rotator cuff tendinitis/carpal tunnel syndrome/or thoracic outlet syndrome are not a consequence of the job. Without a claims history and medical records to back you up, getting the compensation you should be entitled to is very difficult.

When you don't take time off because you know "they can't do without you" at work, remember the high-priced compensation consultant who will be paid by your employer to fight against your right to benefits to compensate for the fact you can't work in your chosen profession anymore because of your injuries.

Is it really worth it?

Sarah OLeary handles WCB appeals for members whose claims were initially rejected. Contact her through the HSA office, or email sarah@hsabc.org.

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