



The APA valuing skills series

Physiotherapy in occupational health



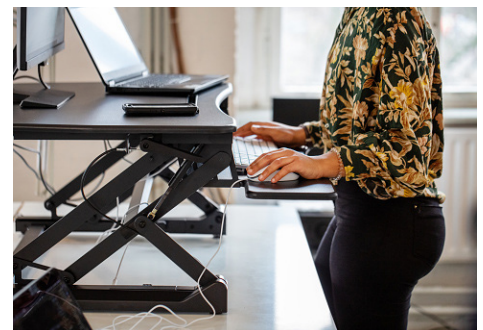
Musculoskeletal injuries are a leading cause of absenteeism and reduced productivity in the workplace.

With many musculoskeletal workplace injuries being preventable, physiotherapy plays a key role in extending and optimising the productive working lives of Australians. The average Australian spends close to 2000 hours at work each year.¹ While more people are now working from home rather than in the office², the risk of injury and ill health remains unchanged.³ Physiotherapy has a vital role to play in people's health—both on and off the job.⁴

Prevention and rehabilitation

Onsite physiotherapy services help prevent injuries and reduce musculoskeletal risks in the workplace

Occupational health physiotherapists take a risk management approach to injury prevention and management, in line with occupational health and safety laws of the relevant jurisdiction. Early intervention is critical to help workers with an injury or illness recover and return to work faster. It has been shown to significantly reduce the impact and duration of emerging symptoms of illness or injury, and may also assist to prevent secondary or chronic conditions. Evidence also suggests that focused early intervention programs help drive a positive workplace health and safety culture.⁵



Benefits of physiotherapy

Physiotherapy offers cost-effective, evidence-based healthcare delivering value to the individual, employer, insurance scheme and healthcare system.

Physiotherapists possess the knowledge and skills to enable early identification of potential workplace risk factors. Work design, education and training are ways in which physiotherapy prevention programs⁵ can reduce the incidence and impact of injury and illness in workers.



Occupational health physiotherapists

Provide advice and education with **health promotion activities** with an aim to create a safer work environment and reduce the risk of injuries. Their expertise contributes significantly to maintaining a healthy workforce and preventing work-related injuries.


Evaluate how work tasks and environments impact an individual's health and physical well-being.

Educate individuals, teams and organisations about injury prevention, proper body mechanics, and workplace ergonomics and initiatives for long term results.

Employ a variety of evidence-based techniques such as the use of validated screening and risk assessment tools and use extended clinical expertise to identify and address issues.

Onsite physiotherapy has numerous benefits for both **employers** and **employees**.

From health promotion to early intervention and active rehabilitation, physiotherapy can assist with a worker's health journey.

	IMMEDIATE DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT	Immediate onsite assessment, diagnosis and treatment of an injury by a physiotherapist means that work and non-work-related injuries can be treated effectively at the workplace, reducing the loss of productivity and costs associated with employees leaving the workplace for offsite treatment.
	EARLY INTERVENTION	Onsite physiotherapy facilitates early intervention by allowing employees to be treated for work and non-work related niggles, aches or pains before they develop in severity, or become a work related issue. Addressing these issues early and discussing with the workplace, can reduce the risk of developing more serious injuries that could reduce productivity and/or require extended time off work.
	PREVENTION	Physiotherapy can help prevent injuries from occurring in the first place. Occupational physiotherapists proactively roam onsite and provide on-the-job education and training to employees, such as correct manual handling techniques, safe work area set up, or ergonomic analysis. This helps to prevent injuries from occurring and promotes a culture of safety in the workplace.
	FASTER RETURN TO WORK	If an employee does become injured, onsite physiotherapists can facilitate return to work by providing timely modifications to duties, rehabilitation treatment, and facilitating efficient communication between medical professionals, managers, and the injured worker. This creates a supportive and practical pathway for returning to work earlier, reducing the overall cost of the business' workers' compensation claims and insurance premiums.
	REDUCED COSTS AND INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY	By providing immediate assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of injuries within the workplace, onsite physiotherapy services assist the worker with their recovery and help to reduce lost productivity and costs. Early intervention and accelerated return to work practices reduce impact to the individual as well as the overall cost of workers' compensation claims and insurance premiums, ultimately improving the financial viability of the business.
	PROACTIVE MEASURES	By investing in onsite physiotherapy, employers and employees can take a proactive approach to occupational health and safety. Occupational physiotherapists are ideally placed to detect and address poor movement patterns, which prevents injuries occurring. They also provide tailored education and training to employees to raise awareness and address any aches or pains before they develop into more serious injuries, promoting a culture of safety and support in the workplace.
	TAILORED APPROACH	Onsite physiotherapy services provide a tailored approach to injury prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation, as well as addressing larger issues such as work flow and work design. Physiotherapists conduct manual handling assessments, job task analysis, provide on-the-job training, creating a customised plan that fits the unique needs of the workplace.

References

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