

How physiotherapy can play a vital role in helping to treat common workplace injuries in the tourism and hospitality industry

When it comes to soft-tissue injuries, which result from sprains and strains, a physiotherapist can offer valuable knowledge and skills to help manage these injuries. Particular occupations within the tourism and hospitality industry, such as room attendants and ski instructors, may be more susceptible to such types of injuries. In fact, almost 60% of injuries within the ski and hotel sectors typically involve strains of some kind, which may benefit from physiotherapy.

In certain circumstances, WorkSafeBC may support and accept the role of physiotherapy, in relation to injury prevention, claims management and return to work programs. Here are some frequently asked questions to help employers understand how physiotherapy can play a part in supporting their injured workers.

How can physiotherapy help reduce injury claims?

Physiotherapists offer a wide range of services, including education, consultation, injury diagnosis and treatment. It is therefore important to be clear about what services you are asking for or receiving, and to understand how they fit within the current WorkSafeBC claims model.

Although education and consultation play an important role in injury prevention, these are voluntary services and are therefore at the discretion of (and paid for) by the employer or worker. WorkSafeBC considers physiotherapists to play a key role within the injury management team. It is important to ensure that physiotherapy services are properly engaged, at the time of injury assessment and treatment, in order to avoid uncertainty concerning what is covered by WorkSafeBC.

Can an injured worker go directly to a physiotherapist or must they see a doctor first?

An injured worker may see a physiotherapist for an initial assessment without needing to be referred by a doctor first. However, they must have a claim number. In cases where a worker has a pending claim (where a decision hasn't yet been made), they may receive an initial assessment through a physiotherapist. Conversely, those with an accepted claim are able to receive ongoing treatment. Keep in mind that it may be prudent to see a doctor first, depending on the circumstances of the injury.

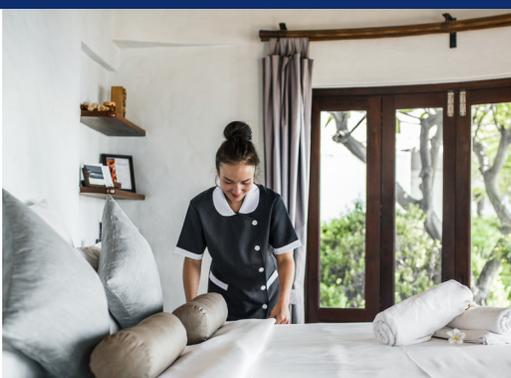
In what circumstances should a worker see a doctor and not go directly to physiotherapy?

If a worker is experiencing significant pain, has restricted mobility, a possible infection or an underlying health condition, it is recommended that they see a doctor first. This is because such conditions may be complicated and therefore, diagnosis and treatment by a doctor is important.

What is the fastest way to obtain a claim number from WorkSafeBC?

The fastest way for injured workers to report their injury and receive a claim number is via the Teleclaim Contact Centre (**1.888.967.5377**). Remember that the physiotherapist will require a claim number prior to the initial session. Another way to get a claim number is via the Employer's Report of Injury or Occupational Disease (Form 7), which, once submitted, will generate a claim number. However, this will take more time. Any workplace injuries that result in physiotherapy treatment must be reported to WorkSafeBC.

If an injured worker is calling to register a claim so that they may access physiotherapy, they should tell the agent that they require a claim number for medical treatment.



Can an injured worker choose to see any physiotherapist?

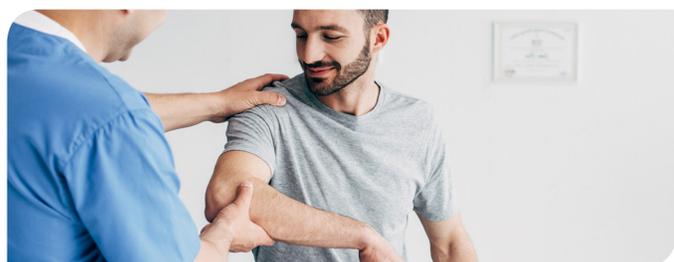
An injured worker can see any physiotherapist. However, in order for it to be covered by WorkSafeBC, the physiotherapist must be part of WorkSafeBC’s contracted network of providers. You can find the current list of contracted physiotherapists here: go2hr.ca/physio This list is being updated regularly, as more contracted providers are added.

If a claim has already been accepted, can a worker opt to see a non-contracted physiotherapist?

They may opt to see a non-contracted physiotherapist. However, the worker will be required to pay privately for treatment and then seek reimbursement. Keep in mind that WorkSafeBC’s reimbursement rate is generally lower than the treatment costs charged by private clinics, so the worker will be out of pocket for their treatment.

What happens if a worker goes directly to a physiotherapist for the treatment of a work related injury, without establishing a claim first? Will they still be reimbursed?

They will have to pay for the private treatment upfront and may be able to claim some of their treatment costs through WorkSafeBC. However, this is not guaranteed and the claim may not be accepted.



What role can first aid attendants play in this process?

First aid attendants are encouraged to play an active role in an organization’s return to work program. Many employers see value in their first aid attendants receiving additional training and consultation via qualified physiotherapists, particularly if common injuries that happen in their workplace lend themselves to physio. Many employers have seen positive results through enhancing the skillsets of their first aid attendants and their ability to recommend physio as a valuable form of treatment in certain circumstances. In any event, first aid attendants must abide by the terms of their individual certification. This includes determining whether an injured worker should be referred to a doctor or qualified practitioner, in accordance with their training.

How to initiate physiotherapy treatment:

Here are some key steps for workers to follow, after they have reported a work-related injury to their employer:

1. Contact the Teleclaim Contact Centre at 1.888.967.5377 to register your claim.
2. Check this list to locate your nearest WorkSafeBC contracted physiotherapist: go2hr.ca/physio
3. Take your claim number with you to your physio appointment.
4. Keep in regular contact with WorkSafeBC about the status of your claim.