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First Aid Basics for 10 Common Workplace Injuries

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☐ KEY TAKEAWAYS

When a worker is injured, it's not good enough to just open the first aid kit and try to guess at the best way to treat them. Learning how to treat these injuries ahead of time will help you respond when the time comes.

 First Aid Basics for 10 Common Workplace Injuries

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Many common workplace injuries can be treated on site using the materials in a standard first aid kit. Even more serious injuries that require qualified medical care can be less severe and less likely to be fatal if first aid is

administered immediately. Knowing some first aid basics, then, is an essential part of workplace safety.

(See [First Aid Kits: The Essential List](#) to learn what to stock in yours.)

This article will go over ten common first aid incidents and provide a brief overview of how to treat them on the scene.

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Sprains, Strains, and Tears

Sprains, strains, and tears are injuries to the muscles or ligaments. When a worker suffers from one of these, the first thing to do is immobilize the affected area, elevate it, and apply ice and compression to reduce swelling.

Strains accompanied by severe pain, swelling, or discoloration may require a trip to the hospital. In milder cases, rest, ice, and anti-inflammatory medication will help the area heal within a few days or week.

Soreness and Pain

If an employee complains of soreness or pain, the cause needs to be identified and removed. One common source of soreness is poor [ergonomics](#), including bad posture or repetitive motions during the course of the day. Determining the root cause of the issue and addressing it can result in immediate improvement. If pain is severe or persists, the employee may need to visit a healthcare professional for a diagnosis.

(Learn about the [Top Ergonomics Issues in the Workplace](#).)

Bruises and Contusions

Bruises and [contusions](#) usually occur as a result of impact with an object, whether it is moving or stationary. The site of the injury is often swollen and takes on a purple or blackish discoloration. If the pain is not tolerable,

administer over-the-counter pain killers.

Lukewarm water in a small plastic bottle that is then rolled over the affected area can hasten the re-absorption of blood, which can improve the appearance of the bruise. This warm water therapy can be performed periodically until the pain and discoloration have gone away.

Cuts, Lacerations, and Punctures

Cuts, [lacerations](#), and [punctures](#) can be quite serious. If bleeding is not profuse, wash the site of injury with water and soap. You can also apply antiseptic solution. Cover the wound with sterilized gauze and hold it in place with adhesive tape. If there is bleeding, apply direct pressure. Never try to remove objects or debris from a wound.

Fractures

[Fractures](#) are broken bones, and they can occur as a result of falls or other impact. When this happens, the affected part should be immobilized and unnecessary manipulation of the affected area should be avoided.

Remember that a fracture could sever a blood vessel or a nerve if it is not immobilized, resulting in a much more serious injury. Immobilize the injured part, and transport the patient to the nearest hospital or medical clinic as soon as possible.

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(Learn the [Workplace First Aid Basics for Broken Bones](#).)

Burns

For mild to moderate burns, run cool water over the burned area for up to 15 minutes (avoid using ice). Then, cover the affected area with clean gauze to prevent infection and contact with the air, which can cause pain.

If the burn is severe (affecting more than two layers of skin) or covers a large area, the burned area can be elevated and covered with a clean, moist, sterile bandage or cloth. Never try to remove burned clothing. Call emergency personnel to the scene immediately.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

[Carpal tunnel syndrome](#) (CTS) occurs when the median nerve, which runs from the forearm to the palm of the hand, becomes pressed or squeezed at the wrist. It is usually caused by an injury to the wrist that causes swelling, such as sprain or fracture.

CTS is very common among workers who frequently use vibrating hand tools and those who use a computer mouse for long periods.

If you suspect CTS, use an analgesic, muscle relaxant, or anti-inflammatory drug and instruct the injured worker to rest.

Amputations

The most serious immediate concern for an amputation is bleeding. The best way to reduce bleeding is by applying pressure. If that doesn't work, a tourniquet may be used. Because this may have complications, it should be applied by someone with first aid training if possible and should only be used in situations where the bleeding cannot be stopped by more simple means.

(Learn about [First Aid for Major Trauma: Crushes, Amputations, and Impalement](#).)

Chemical Burns and Corrosion

When the skin is exposed to a chemical like hydrochloric or sulfuric acid, it can result in a chemical burn or corrosion.

The first step in treating a chemical burn is to remove as much chemical from the skin as possible by flushing it with water or, if it's a dry powder, brushing it off and removing affected clothing and jewelry. Apply a damp, cool compress to relieve pain and then cover the affected area with a clean sheet or cloth to avoid infection and prevent contact with the air.

In cases where the victim is showing any bodily reaction to the injury, contact emergency personnel immediately.

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