

# Chronic Pain May Lead to Workers' Comp Claim

Chronic pain refers to a condition where the pain does not improve with time. The pain may affect a certain part of your body, such as low-back pain or headaches, or involve many regions at the same time, as in fibromyalgia or osteoarthritis.

Chronic pain is an increasing basis for Pennsylvania workers' compensation claims. A rise in claims for chronic pain coincides with an aging workforce.

According to the Institute of Medicine, more than 116 million Americans suffer from chronic pain. Chronic pain affects more people than heart disease, cancer and diabetes. The costs of lost productivity and treatment of chronic pain are up to \$635 billion a year.

## How Employers can Help

Employers need to develop programs to respond to and prevent these types of injuries from occurring. Chronic pain becomes its own illness and is more than just a symptom of a disease, illness or injury.

Predictive modeling has been used by some employers with success. A Pennsylvania grocery retailer is using a proactive approach that it calls Pre Injury Management. The program starts with physical evaluations of those hired for warehouse jobs to ensure physical ability, ergonomic evaluations on new equipment and reviews of work-area designs and processes. If an employee experiences pain, a safety specialist discusses minor changes to the way that the job is done that may alleviate the pain.

Medical treatment generally includes pain rehabilitation,

because medications, injections and surgery do little to relieve chronic pain. Employers may also want to bring on nurse care managers to coordinate treatment between a physician and injured worker. This may reduce the risk of long-term narcotics dependence to treat chronic pain.

The increasing prevalence of chronic pain injuries sometimes caused by repetitive use is increasingly a basis for workers' comp claims. Early intervention is critical and may reduce the chances that employees suffer chronic pain injuries.

Source: [Chronic Pain Workers' Comp Claims Increasing for Employers](#)