

Fundamentals of a Workplace First Aid Program for Employers

FIRST AID INJURIES

First aid is medical care that all employers must provide to their employees. The difference between first aid and medical treatment is based on the type of treatment an employee receives. It does not depend on whether the treatment is provided by a physician or another licensed health-care professional.

The California Labor Code, Section 5401(a) defines first aid as "any one-time treatment, and any follow-up visit for the purpose of observation of minor scratches, cuts, burns, splinters, or other minor industrial injury, which do not ordinarily require medical care. This one-time treatment, and follow-up visit for the purpose of observation, is considered first aid even though provided by a physician or registered professional personnel, and can be self-insured.

IMPORTANT: Self-insuring your first aid claims helps control your experience modification and workers' compensation premiums.

Treatment is not considered first aid in either of the following circumstances:

- Medical care goes beyond a one-time treatment and follow-up visit
- The injury causes an employee to lose time from work beyond his or her work shift

Employer/Employee Reporting Not Required for First Aid

Another difference between first aid and medical treatment is the employers and employees reporting responsibilities.

Specifically:

- If treatment is considered first aid, the employer is not required to submit an *Employer's Report of Occupational Injury or Illness* to the employers Workers Compensation insurer nor provide a *Workers' Compensation Claim Form* to the employee
- If additional care is needed beyond first aid, both the injury report and claim form must be submitted. The two forms must also be submitted for injuries that result in lost time beyond the date of the incident

Specifically, “What is First Aid?”

For the purposes of Workers Compensation, “first aid” means the following:

1. Using a non-prescription medication at nonprescription strength (for medications available in both prescription and non-prescription form, a recommendation by a physician or other licensed health care professional to use a non-prescription medication at prescription strength is considered medical treatment for recordkeeping purposes);
2. Administering tetanus immunizations (other immunizations, such as Hepatitis B vaccine or rabies vaccine, are considered medical treatment);
3. Cleaning, flushing or soaking wounds on the surface of the skin;
4. Using wound coverings such as bandages, Band-Aids TM, gauze pads, etc.; or using butterfly bandages or Steri-Strips TM (other wound closing devices such as sutures, staples, etc., are considered medical treatment);
5. Using hot or cold therapy;
6. Using any non-rigid means of support, such as elastic bandages, wraps, non-rigid back belts, etc. (devices with rigid stays or other systems designed to immobilize parts of the body are considered medical treatment for recordkeeping purposes);
7. Using temporary immobilization devices while transporting an accident victim (*e.g.*, splints, slings, neck collars, back boards, etc.).
8. Drilling of a fingernail or toenail to relieve pressure, or draining fluid from a blister;
9. Using eye patches;
10. Removing foreign bodies from the eye using only irrigation or a cotton swab;
11. Removing splinters or foreign material from areas other than the eye by irrigation, tweezers, cotton swabs or other simple means;
12. Using finger guards;
13. Using massages (physical therapy or chiropractic treatment are considered medical treatment for recordkeeping purposes); or
14. Drinking fluids for relief of heat stress.

It is advisable to put your First-Aid Program policies and procedures in writing. Contracting with an occupational injury specialist like Concentra makes this process easy. Policies and procedures should be communicated to all employees, including those workers who may not read or speak English. Language barriers should be addressed both in instructing employees on first-aid policies and procedures and when designating individuals who will receive first-aid training and become the on-site first-aid providers.

Need help setting up your program? No problem – just contact your Granite Insurance professional for assistance.

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