

The hard data on fixing soft tissue injury

Australia's most common workplace injuries – sprains and strains – are also our most stubborn, barely having changed over the last decade but one program backed by hard data is making a difference.

Onsite Health Solutions will present the results of its SafeSpine program at the Queensland Safety Show from June 21 to 23. The corporate health provider boasts positive results for 96.4 per cent of the 30,000 Australian workers who have participated in the program to date. Increased range of movement was reported by 45 per cent of participants, while 46.7 per cent enjoyed both increased range of movement and decreased pain.

The benefits have translated into improved OHS results for employers. Lost time injury frequency rates (LTIFR) for mining giant Downer EDI, for example, fell from 7.72 in 2007 to 1.09 in 2008 after implementing SafeSpine. A university study of more than 4,000 construction workers found a 60.38% reduction in back and neck injuries.

Described as a "musculoskeletal health education program specialising in injury reduction", SafeSpine places the emphasis on warm up stretches and exercises that prevent muscle imbalances and soft tissue creep.

Fleta Solomon of Onsite Health Solutions explains, "Soft tissues surrounding the spine creep into a stretched position losing recoil properties."

"The back is more susceptible to injury due to unstable muscles resulting in a weakened posture. Activities such as bending and slouching are often responsible for soft tissue creep and are frequently the 'set-up' for recordable injuries."

To ensure the program's benefits are ongoing, SafeSpine includes a 12-step maintenance blueprint that follows the introductory phase.

"A shift in attitude is essential for any cultural change to be achieved and maintained," says Ms Solomon.

SafeSpine begins with workshops; leader training, assessment and certification; physical application of principles into the workplace to reinforce principles and create culture; and physical job task analysis of work tasks if required.

Onsite Health Solutions calls the exercises "an advanced musculoskeletal Warm Up for Work stretching program designed to prepare the body and mind for the job tasks that lie ahead."

Led for 5-10 minutes at the beginning of a shift and/or throughout the day, warm-ups include a series of mobility exercises, job oriented stretches, balance, coordination and activities that stimulate the brain to enhance mind/body integration.

Onsite Health Solutions will demonstrate its SafeSpine program to Queensland Safety Show visitors from June 21 to 23. Sponsored by myosh, the Queensland Safety Show and Materials Handling Show are co-located Queensland Manufacturing Show at the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre. For more information, visit www.qldsafetyshow.com.au email safetyvisitor@aec.net.au or phone Australian Exhibitions & Conferences Pty Ltd on 03 9654 7773.

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