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# Spotlight on Injured Workers



## Workplace Accidents/Injuries and WSIB

If you are injured at work it is important to report your injury as soon as possible to your employer and you **MUST** file a claim with WSIB no later than six months after the injury or diagnosis. Claims are processed quicker if there is **NO** delay in seeking medical attention and reporting injury/illness.

Remember, you have the right to choose your treating physician and seeking a hot or cold pack from the company nurse or visiting the company doctor will not initiate a WSIB claim. Workers seeking medical attention from their family doctor, emergency room or walk-in clinic **MUST** inform them that the injury/illness is work-related.

## COMPANY DOCTORS: WHAT YOU NEED TO CONSIDER

When a worker is injured on the job, if an employer has a company doctor, they will often encourage their employees to see that doctor or suggest they receive first aid from them. A company doctor is someone who is usually employed by the company or a large percentage of their work is provided by the employer. Because of this, a company doctor has a vested interest in keeping the employer happy and claim free. While these doctors and Occupational Health Nurses (OHNs) are not “bad doctors”, per se, they may be motivated to help the employer with claim suppression and fewer applications for benefits.

The Workers' Compensation Department is concerned with the practice of workers seeking the services of company doctors, OHNs and/or in-house medical departments that exist in our unionized workplaces. For occupational or non-occupational injury/illness, the primary role of a physician is to treat their patients injury/illness while assisting workers with returning to work including modified/accommodated work. However, company doctors and nurses that cater to employers have conflicting loyalties: serving the medical needs of their patients while protecting the company's bottom line.

Possible **disadvantages** to seeing an in-house health care provider:

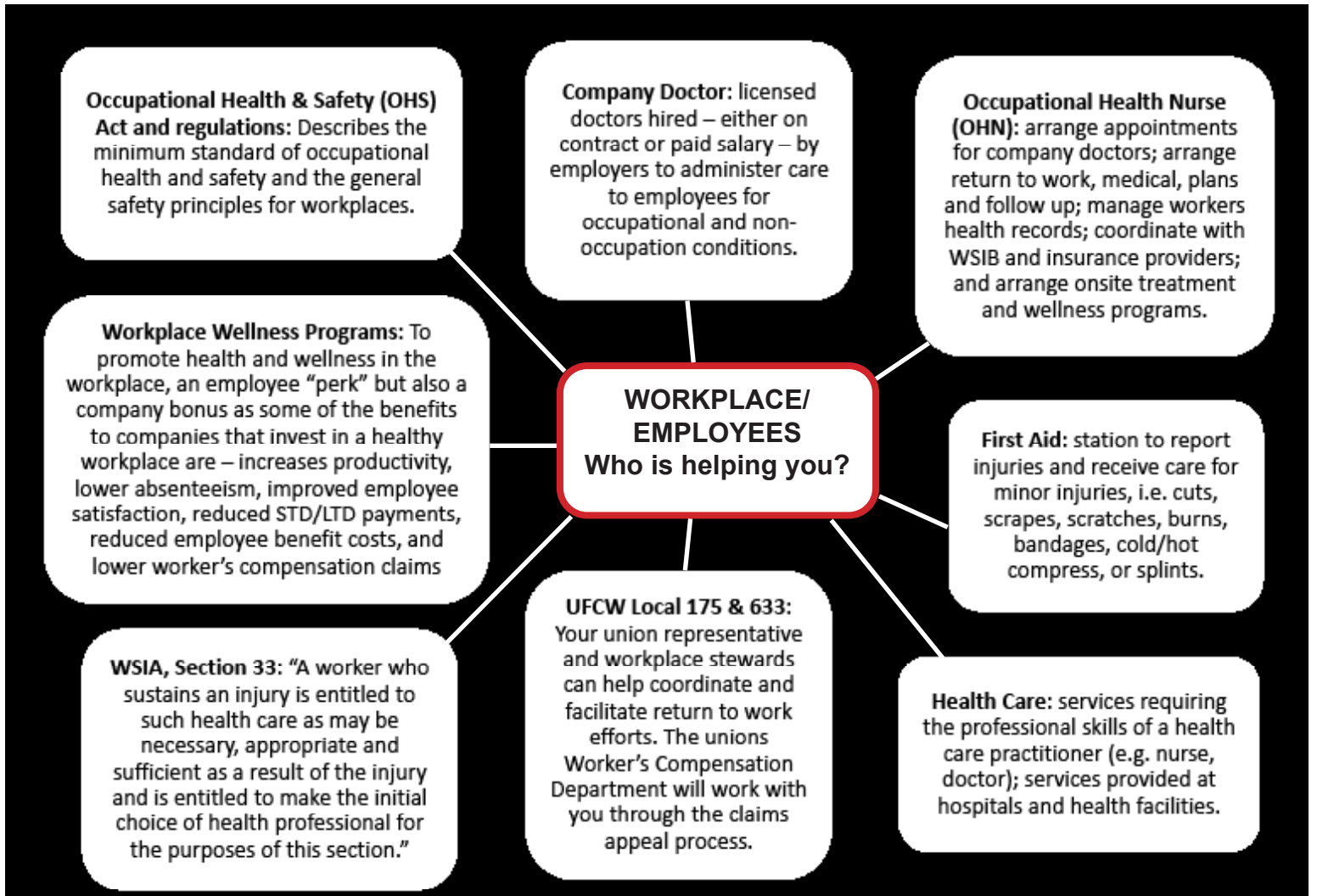
- Incomplete testing and diagnosis
- Delay in reporting test results and symptoms
- Delay in reporting to WSIB
- Inaccurate assessment of special treatment needs
- Generalized assessments of workers' health
- Downplaying the severity of injuries
- Delay in referring or requesting necessary tests like x-rays, ultrasounds, MRIs
- Misdiagnoses
- Improper treatment
- Encourage return to work when workers are not fully healed
- Prematurely determine that a worker has healed or met Maximum Medical Recovery (MMR)
- Cannot provide treatment for chronic pain

Things you should consider when choosing your personal course of treatment:

- Is the injury/accident work-related?
- Is the injury/accident major or minor?
- Does the company health care provider have my best interests in mind?
- Is the company health care provider required to report back to my employer/supervisor?
- What privacy and confidentiality\* rights do I have?

\* Confidentiality: legal responsibilities and professional obligations to ensure the public trust and prevent unauthorized and inappropriate disclosure of personal health information.





## Workplace Wellness Programs

In Ontario, it is becoming increasingly harder to find a family doctor, particularly in our large urban centres. More and more members and their families are relying on walk-in clinics, ERs and occupational health clinics for their long-term care needs. Therefore, there is a rise in company doctors/nurses (in-house health care providers) and some of our unionized workplaces are seeing “Workplace Wellness Programs” being established.

Wellness plans can consist of one of a variety of elements and offer such services as:

- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)
- Health Promotion and Education
- Weight Management
- Fitness Programs
- Stress Management
- Screenings and Immunizations
- Individual goal setting and incentives

There are also some employers who are opting to cover nonessential medical services such as chiropractic and physical therapy services for workplaces that have a tendency for repetitive stress injuries and back problems.

On the surface, Wellness Programs are a great benefit to our union members. However, remember that Wellness Programs are voluntary for workers and do not replace negotiated benefits in your collective agreement.

