Does job rotation prevent sprains and strains?

- Some research studies have found a reduction in risk. Other studies have found no benefit from job rotation when looking at injuries, symptoms of injury, and absenteeism.
- When a rotation scheme includes jobs that require a lot of physical effort, the overall risk of injury can go up, not down.
- Many workplaces don't have enough variety in their jobs to make rotation a good option.

What is job rotation?

Job rotation involves cross-training employees so that they can move from one job to another on a set schedule. Rotation can help relieve boredom and increase job satisfaction.

Job rotation may not help prevent injuries

The theory behind rotation as a way to prevent injuries is that you can move employees out of strenuous or repetitive jobs to give them a break. Unfortunately, that means moving other employees into those jobs, placing them at risk for injury. If the physical demands of jobs are high enough, you can end up with more injuries, not fewer.

When job rotation doesn't work

- When there's not a variety of work available, such as in a warehouse where most jobs involve lifting, or in assembly work where most jobs are repetitive.
- When seniority or pay scale differences limit movement between jobs.
- When jobs are highly specialized or require lots of training.
- When workers have different physical capacities.
- When bringing an injured worker back to work.
- When rotating workers to jobs that require using the same muscle groups.

Finding the right solution

If the physical demands of a job are causing sprains and strains, then it will be more effective to reduce those demands rather than spreading them out among more workers. We have consultants who can work with you to find practical solutions to reduce injury risk. If job rotation could work for you, we can help you design a program. We've also outlined a process that you can use to find and fix the hazards that cause sprains and strains.