

HEALTHCARE: CAREFUL PLANNING AND SUPPORT FOR THE GUARDIANS OF HEALTH.

Employees in the healthcare industry provide care to the public, so understanding how to manage absenteeism and keep them at the bedside in this industry is especially important.



- Safety programs are critical in this environment.
- Return-to-work programs may be beneficial. They may be difficult to implement, however, where accommodations and modifications to existing jobs are problematic.

The chart below identifies that 79 percent of employees are young women. Pregnancy and related absences are chief among Short-term Disability leaves and, as such, drive significant leave usage for childbirth, child care and other Family Medical Leave Act absences. Musculoskeletal conditions are the primary cause for Long-term Disability (LTD) absences, while back and neck injuries head the list for Workers' Compensation absences. It's not surprising: Healthcare workers often spend many hours on their feet and strain to lift and move equipment, patients, etc.

To help ensure proper care for patients, planning ahead can be key. Some suggestions you may wish to take:

- Invest in support equipment for staff. By ensuring that employees have proper lifts and other support equipment and proper training, employers can help reduce the risk of injury.

Following is a compilation of relevant data¹ for the healthcare industry by the Integrated Benefits Institute, a nonprofit supplier of and leader in health and productivity research. Here you'll find current demographics on various types of absence claims, including workdays lost, costs, and the most prevalent causes. Keep them in mind as you devise your program for healthier practices and safer returns to work.

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Worker Demographics:

% Male	21%
% Female	79%
Age < 35 years	39%
Age between 35 and 54 years	48%
Age 55+	13%
Daily wages and benefits	\$215
Additional lost productivity (LP) costs per absence	\$75

Short-term Disability:

Three most prevalent conditions:	Pregnancy and related Musculoskeletal conditions Injury and poisoning
Average claims per 100 covered lives ²	11.1
Annual lost workdays per claim ^{2, 3}	30.5
Total wage and LP costs per disability incident	\$6,227

Long-term Disability:

Three most prevalent conditions:	Musculoskeletal conditions Neoplasms Nervous system conditions
Average claims per 100 covered lives ²	1.94
Annual lost workdays per claim ^{2, 3}	201.61
Total wage and LP costs per disability incident	\$25,998

Workers' Compensation (Claims with Lost Time only):

Three most prevalent body part groups injured:	Back and Neck Lower Extremities Upper Extremities
Average claims per 100 full-time employees	2.5
Lost workdays per claim ^{2, 3}	48.2
Total Costs per incident	\$15,424

¹ Integrated Benefits Institute, "Benefits Intelligence," 2008 Benchmarking data. <www.ibiweb.org/benefitsintelligence>

² Claims refers to active claims. That is, any claim that was opened, closed, had any Lost Time or on which any payments were made during 2008.

³ Lost Time data refers to workdays lost during calendar year 2008 only.