

Shoulder Injuries Among New York Healthcare Workers

How Workers' Compensation Protects Injured Nurses, Aides, and Medical Professionals

Health care workers put their bodies on the line every day to care for others. In New York, that often means long shifts, heavy lifting, and physically demanding tasks in crowded hospitals, nursing homes, and clinics. One of the most common and debilitating outcomes of this work is a shoulder injury.

For [nurses](#), aides, orderlies, and other medical professionals, a shoulder injury isn't just painful; it can make it nearly impossible to do the job. From lifting patients to positioning equipment, the shoulders play a role in almost every physical task in healthcare. When these injuries happen on the job, [workers' compensation benefits](#) are supposed to provide medical coverage and wage replacement. Unfortunately, many injured workers encounter roadblocks from employers or insurance companies.

At [Pasternack Tilker Ziegler Walsh Stanton & Romano LLP](#), our attorneys have represented injured health care workers across New York for decades. Here's what every medical professional should know about shoulder injuries, their impact, and how workers' compensation comes into play.

Why Shoulder Injuries Are So Common in Health Care

The shoulder is one of the most mobile and complex joints in the body. It allows for an extraordinary range of motion, but that flexibility also makes it vulnerable to strain and injury. In healthcare, several factors contribute to the high rate of shoulder injuries:

- **Patient Handling:** Lifting, transferring, or repositioning patients places significant stress on the shoulder joint. Sudden, awkward movements can easily cause a tear or strain.
- **Repetitive Motion:** Tasks like reaching for supplies, pushing carts, or adjusting equipment add up over time, creating overuse injuries.
- **Long Shifts:** Twelve-hour shifts mean prolonged physical stress without adequate recovery time.
- **Emergency Situations:** Responding quickly in emergencies often requires lifting or catching patients in unsafe positions.

The result? Shoulder injuries are among the most frequent [musculoskeletal problems](#) reported by healthcare workers, with thousands of cases filed each year in New York.

Types of Shoulder Injuries Seen in Healthcare Workers

The shoulder is made up of bones, muscles, tendons, and ligaments, and any of them can be injured on the job. Common work-related shoulder injuries include:

- **Rotator Cuff Tears:** The group of muscles and tendons that stabilize the shoulder can tear from lifting or repetitive strain.
- **Shoulder Impingement:** When tendons rub against bone, it causes painful inflammation and limits mobility.
- **Dislocations:** A sudden force can cause the ball of the shoulder joint to pop out of its socket.
- **Labral Tears:** The cartilage lining of the socket can tear, leading to instability and pain.
- **Bursitis or Tendinitis:** Inflammation of soft tissues in the shoulder often results from overuse.
- **Frozen Shoulder (Adhesive Capsulitis):** Stiffness and loss of movement can develop after an untreated injury.

These injuries often require extended treatment ranging from physical therapy and injections to surgery, followed by long recovery times that can keep healthcare workers out of their jobs.

The Toll Shoulder Injuries Take on Healthcare Workers

A shoulder injury affects more than just work duties. Healthcare workers often describe how the pain and loss of mobility disrupt daily life:

- Difficulty lifting children, groceries, or household items.
- Trouble sleeping due to shoulder pain at night.
- Inability to perform hobbies like sports or exercise.
- Emotional strain from being sidelined and unable to help patients.

In a profession where dedication to patient care runs deep, being forced off the job can feel devastating. It's also financially overwhelming, especially when medical bills start piling up. That's where New York's workers' compensation system comes in.

Workers' Compensation Rights for Health Care Workers in New York

Under New York law, most employers are required to carry workers' compensation insurance. For health care workers, this means that if your shoulder injury is job-related, you have the right to:

- **Full coverage for medical care related to the injury**, including doctor visits, diagnostic imaging, physical therapy, medication, surgery, and rehabilitation.
- **Partial wage replacement** if you are unable to work or can only return to light duty at reduced pay.
- [Vocational rehabilitation](#) if you cannot return to your previous role.
- **Permanent disability benefits** if the injury leaves a lasting impairment.

Unlike a personal injury lawsuit, workers' compensation does not require proving employer negligence. The only requirement is that the injury happened in the course of your employment.

Challenges in Workers' Compensation Claims

Even though the law is clear, many injured healthcare workers encounter obstacles when filing for benefits. Common challenges include:

- **Denials Based on "Pre-Existing Conditions":** Insurers may argue the shoulder injury [existed before the workplace incident](#).
- **Delays in Approvals:** Medical procedures like MRIs or surgery often face repeated delays.
- **Pressure to Return Too Soon:** Employers may push injured workers back into the job before they've healed.
- **Disputes Over Lost Wages:** Insurers may contest how much wage replacement should be paid.

These tactics are designed to save insurance companies money at the expense of injured workers. Without legal guidance, it's easy to feel overwhelmed or give up.

Why Early Medical Care Matters

Documenting the injury immediately is critical. Healthcare workers often downplay pain, continuing to work until the injury worsens. But waiting too long can jeopardize both health and a future workers' compensation claim.

Prompt medical care ensures:

- **Accurate Diagnosis:** Imaging and exams can determine the extent of damage.
- **Clear Link to Work:** Medical records establish that the injury is job-related.
- **Better Recovery:** Early treatment reduces the risk of chronic or permanent disability.

In addition, New York's strict workers' compensation deadlines make it essential to report the injury and seek medical attention right away.

Long-Term Impact of Shoulder Injuries

For some healthcare workers, a shoulder injury never fully heals. Permanent restrictions may prevent activities such as heavy lifting, reaching overhead, or performing repetitive tasks, making a return to the same job impossible.

In such cases, workers' compensation may provide permanent disability benefits or vocational retraining for a suitable alternative role. But reaching that point often requires strong advocacy to ensure fair evaluation of long-term consequences.

How a Workers' Compensation Lawyer Can Help

The workers' compensation system is supposed to be straightforward, but in practice, it's often complex and adversarial. An experienced New York workers' compensation lawyer can:

- File and manage all paperwork within strict deadlines.
- Gather medical evidence and expert testimony to support the claim.
- Challenge denials or delays from insurance companies.
- Represent the worker in hearings before the Workers' Compensation Board.
- Negotiate settlements that reflect the true cost of long-term medical care and lost earnings.

For healthcare workers who already sacrifice so much, legal representation helps level the playing field against insurance companies focused on minimizing payouts.

Shoulder Injuries Among Union Members and Civil Service Workers

Many healthcare workers in New York are union members or employed in civil service roles. These workers may also be eligible for additional protections such as disability pensions or union-negotiated benefits. Coordinating these benefits with workers' compensation requires careful legal guidance to avoid conflicts or missed opportunities.

Preventing Shoulder Injuries in Health Care

While workers can't eliminate all risks, hospitals and care facilities can take steps to reduce shoulder injuries, including:

- Providing adequate lifting equipment and training.
- Ensuring proper staffing levels to avoid overexertion.
- Rotating assignments to reduce repetitive strain.
- Offering early intervention programs for musculoskeletal pain.

Unfortunately, many facilities fall short, leaving workers exposed to daily hazards. Until systemic changes occur, workers' compensation remains the primary safety net for workers who are injured on the job.

Talk to a New York Workers' Compensation Lawyer Today

If you are a nurse, aide, or healthcare worker in New York dealing with a shoulder injury, you don't have to face the workers' compensation system alone. The attorneys at Pasternack Tilker Ziegler Walsh Stanton & Romano LLP have been standing up for injured workers for more than 90 years.

We understand the unique challenges healthcare workers face, from grueling physical demands to the frustration of battling insurance companies. Our team is prepared to investigate your case, gather the medical evidence you need, and fight for the benefits you deserve.

Your health and livelihood are too important to leave in the hands of an insurance company.
[Contact us today](#) for a free consultation and learn how we can help you move forward.