

Cold and Compression Therapy for “Industrial Athletes” in an Occupational Health Environment

Lyn Moore, RN, NP, COHN-S, is an occupational health nurse practitioner at a refinery in Northern California. She runs an onsite clinic that provides services to 500 refinery employees. She considers them “industrial athletes,” likening the process and value of their recovery to that of professional athletes.



About 60 percent of the refinery employees have a physical dimension to their job, because even managers are periodically required to work in the field. About half of the employees are refinery technicians, who have physically demanding jobs that involve lifting, climbing, pushing, pulling, and twisting.

These technicians may have to lean over while applying extreme force on a giant wrench or they may be engaged in repetitive tasks, such as coker-lancing, which involves twisting multiple controls in quick succession. These activities place extraordinary stress on the workers' bodies and can result in a variety of injuries that require treatment. Parallel with professional athletes and their teams, time lost from the job site results in lost dollars for the employer. Lyn's primary goal as an occupational health nurse is to keep her employees healthy throughout their careers and reduce the number of days each worker loses to injury.

Beginning in 2005, Lyn began using a new treatment tool—the Game Ready™ Injury Treatment System—which is designed to help those with injuries recover quickly. Game Ready improves on traditional ice packs by combining adjustable cold therapy and intermittent compression in a portable device, making it easier for injured workers to apply the two most difficult-to-manage aspects of the RICE (**R**est, **I**ce, **C**ompression, **E**levation)

treatment regimen. Game Ready has been designed to speed healing. This has made the system an indispensable device for professional sports teams, the U.S. Olympic Committee, and numerous military operational forces—all of which require individuals to remain in top physical condition.

In 2008, Lyn's refinery had only eight recordable injuries. Many of the injuries that she sees are relatively minor and can be treated as first aid cases rather than becoming recordable injuries. In these first aid cases, Game Ready prevents workers from missing time at work. Whenever necessary, and the situation allows, a person who is assigned modified duty can often continue to use the Game Ready System even while at work!

Before Lyn discovered Game Ready, she would provide an ice pack for the worker to place on the strained or bruised area. The employee would take the ice pack home for further treatment. In this scenario, the employee often did not adequately ice the injured area because the traditional process was inconvenient. As a result, the healing process was delayed.

Now, when an employee is injured, he or she is immediately treated with the Game Ready System at the refinery's onsite clinic. The employee then receives instruction on the use of the equipment for continued at-home treatment.

The Game Ready System has reduced by 30 percent to 50 percent the time employees must spend on “modified duty” after an injury. This means an employee can more quickly return to “full duty.”

The Game Ready Difference

Since introducing the Game Ready System as an injury management tool at her clinic, Lyn has seen a dramatic difference in the rate of recovery compared to using traditional icing methods.

With a moderately sprained ankle she has historically seen full recovery take 10-14 days. ***With Game Ready that recovery period is reduced to 4-6 days.***

Most importantly for the refinery, there are clear cost benefits to the Game Ready System. Lyn believes that the Game Ready System has reduced by **30 percent to 50 percent** the time employees must spend on “modified duty” after an injury. This means an employee can more quickly return to “full duty.”

Lyn attributes the success of Game Ready to a number of factors:

- **Effective, long-lasting cold.** Because it can provide cold therapy for several hours or more, the Game Ready System is a much more effective treatment than ice packs that need to be refrozen or refilled frequently.
- **Improved compliance.** Employees are more likely to use the Game Ready System because they like the “gadget” factor and appreciate the fact that the system is used by professional athletes.
- **No-hassle ease-of-use.** Game Ready is more convenient than regular ice packs. You can fill the control unit with ice and it will remain cold for most of the day, eliminating the need for refreezing a gel pack or having to continually make ice cubes.

Game Ready also offers a number of other benefits to the refinery employees. For instance, workers who require surgery use the Game Ready unit during their post-surgical rehab. Employees have told Lyn that they have been able to stop taking medication within a day after surgery because Game Ready is very effective at managing pain.

Ultimately, it’s Lyn’s goal to ensure that the refinery employees remain healthy all the way to retirement.

She says she encourages them to think of themselves as “industrial athletes.” Game Ready helps the employees appreciate the importance of proper recovery parallel with professional athletes.

Example: A Refinery Technician hurts his back while bending over and reaching into his toolbox. He goes to the onsite clinic for evaluation. He is in pain and cannot stand up straight. His injury occurs on a Friday, so he is given the Game Ready unit to take home with him over the weekend. He uses the unit faithfully as instructed and comes back to work on Monday. Lyn rechecks him and he has fully recovered.

