

NATA key messages:

Athletic trainers save lives

Sports injuries can be serious. Brain and spinal cord injuries and conditions such as heat illness can be life threatening if not recognized and properly handled. ATs are there to treat acute injuries on the spot. Athletes have chronic illnesses, too. People with diabetes and asthma can and do safely work and exercise, and the athletic trainer can help manage these critical health issues as they relate to physical exertion.

Not all athletes wear jerseys

There's an emphasis on physical activity in America and with the graying of the population, there is an increased incidence of injuries. Boomers have been and will be physically active well into their senior years. Athletic trainers work with the recreational and professional athlete. Many jobs are physically demanding. The duties of a baggage handler, dancer or soldier all require range of motion and strength and stamina, and hold the potential for musculoskeletal injuries.

Athletic trainers are experts

Working to prevent and treat musculoskeletal injuries and sports-related illnesses, athletic trainers offer a continuum of care unparalleled in health care. ATs are part of a team of health care professionals – they practice under the direction and in collaboration with physicians. ATs are specialists; they work with physically active people to prevent and treat injuries and conditions. ATs aren't personal trainers, who focus solely on fitness, conditioning and performance enhancement. ATs are health care professionals.

The athletic trainer is the health care system for athletes and others

Athletic trainers are on-site. They work with patients to avoid injuries; they're there when injuries happen and they provide immediate care; and they rehabilitate patients after injuries or surgery. It's a continuum of care. Athletic trainers come to the patient, not the other way around. They know their patients well because they are at the school, in the theater or on the factory floor every day.

Athletic trainers take responsibility and lower risk

School administrators, athletics directors and coaches have their own jobs, which may pose a conflict of interest with athlete safety; they are not experts in managing injuries or sports-related illnesses, nor should they be responsible to do so. Handling injuries at school or at work, rather than sending the patient to the emergency department, saves money and time loss – and gets them back on their feet faster. Just as professional athletes do, recreational athletes should have access to professional athletic trainers.