

## GO AHEAD ... ASK!

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"One of our warehouse workers is getting ready to come back to work after having back surgery. The surgery was a pretty intense one, so I imagine he was prescribed pain medication. What should I do when he comes back to be sure he and everyone else out in the warehouse are safe?"

Great question! Medication-related situations are sensitive, especially employee protections as they relate to the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#), and your actions should be well thought out and intentional.



A good place to look for guidance is in your **drug-free workplace (DFWP) program documents (i.e., your policy)**. Ideally, your policy should provide a baseline for making decisions. For instance, what does your policy say about

- Employee expectations/obligations when prescribed a medication by a medical professional?
- What he or she should do if the prescribed medication comes with a warning related to work performance (i.e., could interfere with safety or productivity)?
- What he or she should do if experiencing side effects from the medication?

If your policy has clear guidance in these areas, it would be prudent to remind the employee of these responsibilities prior to returning to work so that he can speak to his doctor or you about any related issues or concerns.

It would also be prudent to **train and/or refresh the employee's supervisors** on what to do if they have objective-based suspicion that the employee's use of medication might be impacting safety or work performance (e.g., how to observe, document and respond). Again, these interactions can be quite sensitive, so consider providing a few sample questions or statements your supervisors can use when interacting with employees about their medication use.

Going forward, **employee education** for your entire team about safe medication practices can decrease the likelihood of a situation occurring in the first place. Consider focusing this year's DFWP education session on prescription and over-the-counter medication use, as well as providing resources for your employees to share with their families. The GenerationRx website ([www.generationrxworkplace.com](http://www.generationrxworkplace.com)) has multiple free resources under the "Employee Awareness Tools" you can share (e.g., posters, wallet cards), as well as a free online course ("A Dose of Reality") under "Education and Training Resources."

If you'd like to strategize how to handle this or other situations, give us a call – 614-337-8200. If you're a member of the *Working Partners*® Consortium, troubleshooting is a benefit of your membership.

### **Working Partners**®

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