

Medical Screening and Surveillance

Medical screening and medical surveillance are two fundamental strategies for optimizing employee health. Medical screening is early diagnosis and treatment of the individual and thus has a clinical focus. The fundamental purpose of surveillance is to detect and eliminate the underlying causes such as hazards or exposures of any discovered trends and thus has a prevention focus. Both contribute significantly to the success of worksite health and safety programs.

Medical screening is a method for detecting disease or body dysfunction before an individual would normally seek medical care. Screening tests are usually administered to individuals without current symptoms, but who may be at high risk for certain adverse health outcomes.

Medical surveillance is the analysis of health information to look for problems that may be occurring in the workplace that require targeted prevention. Thus, surveillance serves as a feedback loop to the employer. Surveillance may be based on a single case or sentinel event, but more typically uses screening results from the group of employees being evaluated to look for abnormal trends in health status. Surveillance can also be conducted on a single employee over time. Review of group results helps to identify potential problem areas and the effectiveness of existing worksite preventive strategies.

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