

What is an Athletic Trainer? They are part of the Sports Medicine team.

Athletic Trainers (ATs) are highly educated and skilled health care professionals. In cooperation with physicians and other allied health personnel, the athletic trainer functions as an integral member of the health care team in secondary schools, colleges and universities, sports medicine clinics, professional sports programs, hospitals and other health care settings.

Athletic Trainers have been recognized by the AMA (American Medical Association) as an allied health care profession since 1990. These multi-skilled allied health professionals are strongly supported, academically and clinically by the:

- American Academy of Family Physicians
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine.

Athletic Trainers must graduate from one of the 360 accredited four year undergraduate athletic training programs currently in the US and must pass a national certification exam in addition to state licensure exams. Over 80% of ATs in Ohio have a master's or a doctorate degree.

Athletic Trainers are employed in a variety of professional settings. Schools employ these professionals to handle emergency and non-emergency situations that arise from sport and activity. ***Injury prevention, clinical evaluation and diagnosis, immediate care, treatment, rehabilitation and reconditioning and risk management*** are some of the main areas in which Athletic Trainers are uniquely trained. This background allows ATs to develop and implement comprehensive emergency action plans. They also identify unsafe field or environmental conditions and monitor and provide the proper intervention for heat-related illnesses.

When injuries occur, ATs are there to provide “on the field” or “on the court” immediate assessments. Many sports injuries require more aggressive and advanced rehabilitation. ATs are prepared to design and implement comprehensive rehabilitation programs that are sports and/or position specific and age appropriate. A complete, safe and permanent return to work or competition after an injury has resolved, requires specialized physical reconditioning that can take place during the rehabilitation process. In addition to the above skills, Athletic Trainers also provide education to athletes, parents and coaches on a variety health related issues.

Hospitals, sports medicine clinics, corporate wellness and industrial fitness facilities are employing ATs because of their expertise in biomechanics, injury prevention and rehabilitation. They work with their patients and employees to help get them back to work and play quickly and safely. With their knowledge of musculoskeletal anatomy and function, coupled with their clinical experience in the diagnosis and treatment of musculoskeletal injuries and disorders, ATs are now commonly employed as physician extenders in sports medicine and orthopedic physician's practices. In this setting, the ATs can effectively communicate any activity modification to the patient with emphasis on using proper and safe techniques. They also design and implement home exercise programs in addition to providing gait training, brace, orthotic and crutch fitting.