

Ten Mistakes People Make When Dealing With Doctors After An Injury



INJURED WORKERS

LAW FIRM

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1. Failing to Seek Immediate Medical Attention After a Traumatic Event

The victim is always responsible for proving that he or she was injured in a work accident. Insurance companies often believe that if you aren't hurt badly enough to immediately report your accident to your employer and seek immediate medical attention, you aren't hurt badly enough to deserve compensation. Don't ignore signs of pain, even small ones. See a doctor as soon as possible, as minor injuries can always get worse.

2. Failing to Fully Disclose Your Health History and Habits to Your Doctor

A health care provider will usually ask if you had any injury or sickness before your current problem. It is important to be honest when answering this type of question. Doctors use past medical history to diagnose and treat you. Providing incomplete information can impact the quality of the medical care you receive. Concealing a prior injury or sickness from your doctor will also hurt your legal case. If you provide your doctors with incomplete information, their medical opinions could be rejected by insurance companies and the Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission. Aggravations of pre-existing injuries are covered under workers' compensation.

3. Failing to get Your Accident and Injured Body Parts Accurately Documented in the Medical Records

One of the worst mistakes that an injured worker can make is not to describe in detail on his or her first visit to the doctor the facts of the accident. It is difficult to prove that you had an injury by accident which caused your need for medical treatment if there are no notes in the history section as to how the injury occurred. The same is true of "body parts." Every time, especially the first time, you go to the doctor it is important you tell him every body part that has been injured as a result of the work accident. If a body part is not mentioned, it will be cause for the insurance company to deny treatment in the future.

4. Talking With Your Doctor About Lawsuits or a Lawyer's Advice

A doctor's job is to focus on your medical condition. In order to do that job, a doctor does not have to know about your workers' compensation claim or your lawyer. Sharing your legal issues or concerns with a medical care provider should be unnecessary. Most doctors do not want to be involved in a lawsuit. Remember that whatever you say in confidence to a doctor is not confidential at all in a workers' compensation claim.

5. Missing or Showing up Late for Medical Appointments

Insurance companies and the Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission get to see your medical records. When you skip a medical appointment, your record just says "DNS", which means "did not show." Excuses – no matter how valid – usually do not make it into the record. More than one or two "DNS" entries could make it look like you were not committed to getting better and that you are not seriously injured. Skipping medical appointments or showing up late could also irritate your doctor or physical therapist. Irritated doctors do not make good witnesses for their patients. If you need to cancel – call in advance and reschedule.

6. Failing to Inform Your Doctor if Your Injury is Affecting Your Ability to Work

Insurance companies will not believe that your injury affects your ability to work just because you say so. If your injury is affecting your ability to work, it is important to mention such a problem to your health care provider. Get a copy of your disability slip at each office visit.

7. Failing to Take Medications as Prescribed

There is a reason why doctors prescribe a particular type of medication for a particular time period. You should follow your doctor's recommendation until your doctor tells you something different. If you think a medication is making your muscles ache or your stomach hurt, say so; side effects are not rare, and your doctor can usually switch you to another drug. Don't put yourself in the position where you have to admit that you chose not to follow your doctor's advice. This can be devastating to your claim.

8. Stopping Medical Treatment Too Soon

Insurance companies often believe if a person stops seeking medical treatment for an injury, the injury must be healed. They also believe that significant gaps between treatments suggest that you healed from one injury and must have suffered a new one unrelated to the first. If you have an injury that is affecting your ability to function, you should seek medical treatment until you are healed or until a doctor tells you that there is nothing more that can be done to improve your condition. If you are still suffering and your doctor tells you to "come back as needed" or "call me if you have any problems," you should ask how long you should wait to call if you continue to have the same level of pain and disability.

9. Failing to Follow Treatment Recommendations Related to Depression or Anxiety

Often pain and/or disability can trigger depression and anxiety. Psychological conditions like depression and anxiety are just as real as broken bones. They cannot be overcome without appropriate treatment. Insurance companies are responsible for the resulting psychological conditions but will only agree to authorize treatment for injury related depression and anxiety if those conditions are properly diagnosed and treated by medical professionals.

10. Failing to keep a file

It is important that your lawyer knows every medical care provider that you see after an injury. It is also important that you keep track of all doctor orders, treatment referrals, and/or work restrictions. Keeping a file of all materials provided to you by health care providers and insurance companies will ensure that you can provide all necessary information to your lawyer at the appropriate time.