

ADVICE FOR THE INJURED

No one wants to be injured in an accident, and no one wants to have to hire a lawyer to pursue a claim against the person who caused the injury. However, people are occasionally injured and have to pursue a claim. If this has happened to you, keep in mind the following tips.

Be Careful Whom You Talk To

As strange as it may sound, you have to be careful whom you talk to about your injuries. Of course, you are going to talk to family members and friends about what happened. Out of concern, many of them will offer you all kinds of advice about your medical care and legal matters. Although they are well intentioned, your family and friends are not usually doctors or lawyers, and, even if they are, their advice may not be correct. Instead of relying on advice from nonexperts, rely on a doctor and a lawyer you trust to help you make medical or legal decisions.

When speaking with your doctor, keep the focus on your condition. Make sure you are accurate and complete when you discuss the accident and your injuries. You should see the doctor as soon as possible after the accident. Once you have seen the doctor, make sure your doctor knows immediately about any change in your medical condition.

BE VERY CAREFUL when speaking with an insurance adjustor who works for the insurance company of the person who caused your injuries. No matter how friendly he seems or how much he says he wants to help, he works for your opponent and is trying to pay you as little as possible. The best tactic is to tell the adjustor to call your lawyer.

Keep Good Records

If you are being treated for injuries, you will generate a lot of paperwork, much of which is relevant to your case. If you can keep your records in good order, this will help your lawyer tremendously.

Of course, keep copies of medical records, especially your bills, from all of your doctors and other health-care providers. Records from your health insurer are also important.

If you have missed time from work and are trying to recover for your lost wages, a pay stub showing how much you would have earned can be valuable, as is a statement from your employer telling how much time you have missed from work. Income tax returns from current and prior years are also helpful, allowing a comparison between what you earned before you were injured and what you earned afterwards.

In addition to this, keep any documents that you receive from an insurance company, whether your own or that of the person who caused your injuries. If you receive anything in the mail that looks as if it is related to your case, hang onto it.

Help Your Lawyer to Help You

Finally, don't overlook the obvious. Make sure that your attorney has your current address and phone number, and let him know if they change. Your lawyer will do everything possible to give you plenty of notice about things he may need, and you will have to meet any deadlines the court might impose.

If you need to speak with your lawyer, make an appointment. This ensures that your attorney will have time to speak with you and will be prepared to discuss your case. Lawyers have other clients and other commitments, and "dropping by" without notice may waste your time.

Keeping all of these things in mind will help your case go as smoothly as possible and help to ensure that you recover everything that you deserve.

R. Michael Shickich is the founder of the Injury Law Firm located in Casper. The focus of his practice is personal injury and wrongful death cases.

The Wyoming State Bar does not certify any lawyer as a specialist or expert. Anyone considering a lawyer should independently investigate the lawyer's credentials and ability, and not rely upon advertisements or self-proclaimed expertise.