



What you should know about whiplash injuries.

by Joseph E. Pendergast, III

Whiplash is a unique injury that happens most often to drivers or passengers during rear-end collision automobile accidents, when the force from the impact causes the head to snap violently back and forward. You don't need to be involved in a high-speed crash for a whiplash injury to result. Even at low speeds the unexpected impact can cause injury to your vertebrae, muscles and neck. And while whiplash injuries most often result from car accidents, they can occur in any situation where a sudden back and forth "whipping" movement occurs, including slips, falls, and blows to the head from an assault. In many cases, when people suffer a whiplash injury, it is because of the negligence of others and they should seek compensation.

How do you know if it is whiplash?

Whiplash injuries are not always immediately recognized. If you are involved in an accident, your natural responses and the adrenaline rush may not allow you to relax. But over the course of the next few days, you might experience:

- Tightness in the neck and/or serious neck pain that is dull and aching
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Problems with balance and equilibrium
- Back pain
- Memory problems and difficulty concentrating

If you are suffering from any of these symptoms, you should see a medical specialist, such as a back and neck expert, chiropractor, orthopedic specialist or neurologist, for treatment. Whiplash injuries may seem minor at first, but if left undiagnosed and untreated, whiplash injuries can lead to chronic pain. Untreated whiplash injuries can also make you more susceptible to future back and neck injuries.

What about soft tissue injury?

Soft tissue injury refers to damage to your muscles, ligaments, tendons or nerves, usually caused by direct or indirect trauma. Direct trauma can happen in an accident, from being struck by an object or by falling. Indirect trauma happens when you overuse certain muscles or other tissue through repetitive movements you do as part of your everyday work tasks. Some examples of soft tissue injuries include sprained ankles, pulled tendons and repetitive stress injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

What should you do if you are injured?

When you have a whiplash or soft tissue injury, you should:

- **Have the injury evaluated** by a specialist, such as neck expert, chiropractor or neurologist.
- **Document the injury treatment** and recommended future treatments.
- **Consult with a personal injury attorney** who can help you determine if you have a claim and help you get the compensation you deserve.

IMPORTANT CONSUMER INFORMATION



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ABOUT HARDWICK & PENDERGAST

The personal injury law firm of Hardwick & Pendergast has been providing personal injury legal services to clients throughout Washington State for nearly 40 years. The firm has received the highest rating possible for legal ability and ethics from other attorneys and judges and is listed in the Bar Registry of Preeminent Attorneys.

Two highly respected attorneys lead the firm: Morton Hardwick and Joseph (J.P.) Pendergast, III. Mr. Hardwick is the former president of the South King County Bar Association and former chairman of the board of Valley Medical Center. Mr. Pendergast is a former King County Deputy prosecuting attorney and has extensive trial and appellate court experience.

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