

How Serious Is Whiplash in a Car Accident?

Our Palm Beach County law firm knows how to build strong cases

A car accident happens in seconds, but the effects can last much longer. One of the most common injuries after a crash (particularly a rear-end collision) is [whiplash](#). At first, it might feel like nothing more than a sore neck, but without the right treatment, it can lead to lasting pain and mobility issues.

Recognizing the symptoms and knowing how to treat whiplash early can make a huge difference in your recovery. If you're not sure what to do after sustaining crash-related whiplash, an experienced Palm Beach County, Florida [car accident lawyer](#) can offer legal guidance and help you pursue a claim.

What is whiplash and how does it feel?

Whiplash occurs when a sudden force violently jerks the head forward and backward and strains the muscles, ligaments, and tendons in the neck. The motion mimics the cracking of a whip, which is how the injury got its name.

Many assume whiplash only happens in high-speed crashes, but even low-speed fender benders can cause serious neck strain. Because whiplash primarily affects soft tissues, it doesn't always show up on imaging scans.

How do you know if you have whiplash?

Whiplash symptoms don't always show up immediately after an accident. Some people feel fine at first, only to develop pain and stiffness hours or even days later. Early signs of whiplash include:

- Neck pain and stiffness
- Headaches, often starting at the base of the skull
- Limited range of motion in the neck
- Tenderness in the shoulders, upper back, or arms
- Dizziness or fatigue

At first, these symptoms might seem minor, and therefore, you may feel compelled to dismiss them. But ignoring whiplash can make recovery more difficult, especially if your symptoms worsen.

Can whiplash symptoms get worse over time?

Whiplash isn't always a one-time injury that heals on its own. If left untreated, symptoms can worsen over days or weeks and lead to chronic pain and other complications. Common signs that whiplash is getting worse include:

- Persistent or worsening neck pain
- Tingling or numbness in the arms and hands
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering things
- Trouble sleeping and constant fatigue
- Increased irritability, anxiety, or depression

Can a doctor tell if you have whiplash?

Doctors typically diagnose whiplash through a physical exam, medical history, and tests that assess:

- **Range of motion:** Checking flexibility and mobility in the neck
- **Pain levels:** Identifying tender spots and muscle tightness
- **Neurological function:** Assessing reflexes, strength, and sensation in the arms and hands

In some cases, a doctor may order X-rays, CT scans, or MRIs to rule out fractures or other underlying injuries. A proper diagnosis helps guide treatment and prevents the condition from getting worse.

What is the most effective treatment for whiplash?

Recovering from whiplash takes time, but the right treatment plan can relieve pain and restore mobility. The best treatments to recover from whiplash include:

- **Rest (but not too much):** A short period of rest can help, but staying inactive too long can cause stiffness.
- **Ice and heat therapy:** Ice reduces swelling in the first 48 hours, while heat helps loosen tight muscles afterward.
- **Over-the-counter and prescription meds:** Over-the-counter medicine such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen can help with pain and inflammation. In more severe cases, your doctor may prescribe muscle relaxants or stronger pain relievers.
- **Physical therapy:** Guided stretching and strengthening exercises can improve your mobility and prevent long-term stiffness.
- **Chiropractic care:** Spinal adjustments may help relieve pain, though they aren't right for everyone.
- **Massage therapy:** Gentle massage can ease muscle tension and improve blood flow to the injured area.

How do I pursue a claim for whiplash after a car accident?

If you suffered whiplash in a car accident caused by another driver's negligence, you may be entitled to compensation for medical bills, lost wages, and pain and suffering. To build a strong claim, follow these key steps:

- **Seek medical attention immediately:** Delaying medical treatment can give insurance companies leverage over your claim. The sooner you seek medical attention, the easier it will be to link your whiplash to the car accident.
- **Document everything:** Keep detailed records of medical visits, treatments, prescriptions, and any impact on your daily life. Save copies of medical bills and any correspondence with your doctor.
- **Report the car accident:** Notify your insurance company as soon as possible. Provide accurate details but avoid making statements that downplay your injuries.
- **Gather evidence at the crash scene:** Collect photos of the crash scene, vehicle damage, and any visible injuries. If there were witnesses, get their contact information and statements. A police report can also support your claim.
- **Track lost income:** If whiplash affects your ability to work, keep records of missed days and lost wages. A doctor's note stating work restrictions can strengthen this part of your claim.
- **Seek help from a lawyer:** Insurance companies often dispute whiplash claims and argue that the injury is minor or preexisting. A Palm Beach County car accident lawyer can negotiate on your behalf and help ensure you receive fair compensation.

What proof do you need for whiplash?

To successfully pursue a whiplash claim, you must provide clear evidence of your injury, its connection to your car accident, and the other driver's responsibility. To prove another driver was responsible for your whiplash injury, you must demonstrate these four elements of negligence:

- **Duty of care:** The other driver had a legal obligation to operate their vehicle safely.
- **Breach of duty:** The driver acted carelessly or violated traffic laws (e.g., speeding, running a red light, or tailgating).
- **Causation:** The car accident directly caused your whiplash injury.
- **Damages:** You suffered measurable losses, such as medical expenses, lost wages, or pain and suffering.

The types of evidence that can prove fault in your car accident claim include:

- **Police report:** An official accident report can document fault, especially if the other driver was cited for a violation.

- **Medical records:** Doctor's notes, imaging scans, and treatment records establish the injury and link it to the crash.
- **Photographs and videos:** Pictures of the accident scene, vehicle damage, and visible injuries can support your claim.
- **Witness statements:** Testimony from passengers or bystanders can confirm how the accident happened.
- **Traffic camera or dashcam footage:** Video evidence can show the impact and prove the other driver's actions.
- **Expert testimony:** Accident reconstruction specialists or medical professionals can provide expert opinions on fault and injury severity.

What is a typical payout for whiplash?

There's no set amount for a whiplash settlement because every case is different. Your payout depends on the severity of your whiplash injury, medical costs, lost wages, and how much the injury affects your daily life.

If your whiplash heals quickly with minimal treatment, your settlement could fall between \$2,500 and \$10,000. In this case, you could seek damages from your own insurance company through your personal injury protection (PIP) policy. Since Florida is a "no-fault" state, your PIP policy may compensate you for medical costs and lost wages up to \$10,000.

However, if you need physical therapy or ongoing care, that number could climb to \$10,000 to \$30,000. If it exceeds your PIP limit, you could seek compensation from the other driver's insurance company.

In more severe cases, where chronic pain lingers, your ability to work is impacted, or you need long-term medical treatment, your settlement could exceed \$50,000.

Before accepting a settlement, it's important to be patient and let your attorney determine how much money you're eligible for once you have reached maximum medical improvement. This way, insurance companies can't pressure you into a lowball settlement that barely covers your losses.

Let us fight for the compensation you deserve

If you suffered whiplash in a car accident in Palm Beach County, you deserve fair compensation for your injuries. However, pursuing a whiplash claim can be difficult without legal guidance, especially when insurance companies try to downplay or dismiss your claim. That's where the [Law Offices of Casey D. Shomo](#) comes in.

Our experienced legal team will gather key evidence and medical records to build a strong case to prove the impact of your injury. We handle every aspect of your claim, from negotiating with

the insurance company to filing a lawsuit if necessary. Since we work on a contingency fee basis, you don't pay anything unless we win compensation for you.

Don't let an insurance company take advantage of your situation. Let our firm fight to make sure you get the financial recovery you need. [Contact us](#) today for a free consultation to discuss your case, ask questions, and explore your legal options.

“Casey Shomo and his staff, not only set a realistic expectation for us, but treated us with care and compassion, like family. We would highly recommend Casey Shomo and his team without any hesitation.” – TB, ★ ★ ★ ★ ★